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FOLLOWING ON TO KNOW.

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FOLLOWING ON TO KNOW.

"Their attention was suddenly diverted by the opening of the Lodge door within the Park gates."

Page 4.

FOLLOWING ON TO KNOW;

OR,

OLD DAYS AT HETHERING.

"It may be yours, if ye will entertain it; not only that you may know this to be a truth, that in Jesus Christ is laid up true consolation and rejoicing, that He is the magazine and treasury of it, but that you may know how to bring Him home into your hearts, and lodge Him there, and so to have the Spring of joy within you."

LEIGHTON.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

SEELEY, JACKSON, & HALLIDAY, 54, FLEET STREET,
LONDON. MDCCCLXXII.

250. g. 293.

No Preface is required to the following pages, beyond an assurance to the Reader that the work of the imagination has been permitted only in the drapery of the story. Such descriptions as concern spiritual things are sketched from real life, and are, it is believed, more truthfully given than would be possible without the veil of fiction.

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FOLLOWING ON TO KNOW;

OR,

OLD DAYS AT HETHERING.

CHAPTER I.

HETHERING HALL.

"TO LET.

"This Eligible Mansion, suitable for a Nobleman's or Gentleman's Family, containing spacious entrance hall; noble dining-room and drawing-room suites; school-room ditto; eighteen bed-rooms; extensive kitchen and offices; stabling and coach-houses; large flower and kitchen gardens, and pleasure grounds. The Estate possesses unusual advantages. For further particulars, apply to Mr. TORCLOUD, Appraiser, Auctioneer, &c., from whom cards to view may be obtained at his office, 5, Quadrangle Street, Hethering."

TWO boys and a girl were standing at the foot of the old grey wall skirting Hethering Park, above which this interesting inscription might be seen by all passers-by.

The profound attention with which their three pair of eyes were fastened upon it, and the scrupulous accuracy with which the proprietor of the bluest pair read aloud—for the benefit of himself and his companions—every word of it, including the final reference to Mr. Torcloud and his office in Quadrangle Street, might have earned some commendation had the said bright eyes belonged to children seated in an orderly row upon a school bench, and had the subject of their attention been one of those delightful grammatical problems which, chalked up on the regulation blackboard, are the joy of the certificated schoolmaster, and the aversion of his pupils.

So attractive was Mr. Torcloud's blackboard, however, with its leafy framework of spring foliage contributed by the tree to which it was nailed, and so pleasant was the standing ground in the country road over which the great elm-trees flung their branches, and along whose sides, nestling in the mossy banks, were to be found all manner of spring flowers, that I am inclined to think the young holiday-takers would scarcely have felt it an

infringement of Saturday privileges, if they had been suddenly requested to begin again, giving the parts of speech all through.

But since, on this bright May afternoon, no schoolmaster happened to be lying in wait to improve the occasion, a more lively exercise than that of parsing suggested itself.

"Allen!" exclaimed the youngest of the two boys, "could you hit the capital M if you threw from the other side of the road?"

"Pretty near, I should think," was Allen's reply.

He was the eldest and the tallest of the party, about fifteen years of age, and accomplished, as he forthwith proceeded to show himself, in the noble art of throwing stones.

Charlie and Bessie stood beside him, and an eager competition began, the boys agreeing that Bessie, as the youngest of them and a girl, should *score* if she only hit the board. The stones fell wide at first, and then began to strike the target freely, leaving sundry marks behind where they rubbed off the black paint; a sort of self-registration which the children looked upon as a happy natural advantage in the game.

That their amusement could appear in any other light, did not occur to them until, just after the climax of excitement had been reached, through Allen's missive leaving a staring white spot in the very middle of the letter at which they had been aiming, their attention was suddenly diverted by the opening of the lodge door within the park gates on their right, and the issuing forth of a trim little old lady who, with her black stuff dress, white frilled cap, spectacles, and keys, looked the embodiment of propriety and respectability, and by her very aspect produced in their minds a sudden misgiving as to the lawfulness of the pastime in which they were indulging.

Bessie ran hurriedly behind the boys with a whispered fear that they would be prosecuted according to the utmost rigour of the law, as set forth on another board to which they had previously devoted their attention; whilst her brother Charlie dropped the stone he had been intending to throw, and, with a presence of mind hailed by his companions with grateful admiration, took to gathering

groundsel for his canary, which must have had an unusual appetite, if the bunches gathered bore any proportion to the bird's capacity.

In the meantime good old Mrs. Keats, after looking steadily down the lane, all unconscious of the panic she was producing, turned herself back again and seemed watching now in the direction of the house.

Bessie felt sure she was wanting some one to come and take them into custody, and counselled immediate flight, to which, however, Charlie objected, having a desire for one more fling at the target so conveniently posted up by Mr. Torcloud.

"It was like a girl," he said, "to be afraid. Bessie might go, but he should stay."

"And look," exclaimed Allen, "it's those two she's waiting for that are coming down the avenue now."

Certainly there was nothing very alarming in the appearance of the two peaceful-looking women, whose pace changed from a walk to something very like a run as they perceived that they were being looked for; and Bessie,

reassured, was quite willing to remain as an interested spectator of whatever might happen next.

"Dear, dear!" exclaimed the older of the two women, struggling for breath as she reached the gate. "I feared we was late: it gave me that turn I can't describe, seeing you looking out for us."

"Well, I was half afraid myself you might be, and that's the truth," replied Mrs. Keats; "but you're here now, and there'll be time for you to come in and rest before it comes."

"Likely there'll not be any one this afternoon to see over the house, but we've brought you the key," said the younger of the newly-arrived pair. "It's all straight for showing through the principal rooms."

"It ain't so often one gets a chance of a day out that you can afford to lose it," resumed the first speaker, as she followed Mrs. Keats into the lodge; while the children, considering it more prudent on the whole to abstain from throwing stones just then, strolled down the lane, discussing together as to what the people at the lodge were going to do.

"A day out! It's to Mapleden, then, they're going," said Allen. "The van starts at half-past two, and it's just about time for it to be here."

The words had scarcely passed his lips when, surely enough, the Mapleden van rounded the bend in the road, and presently went by at a tolerably rapid pace.

One glance showed that the lodge party were not in it; another that they had been intending to go, and had let it, unfortunately, drive past them: for there they were, running once more, and signalling with uplifted hands and umbrellas, and faint cries of "Stop!" to the retreating van-driver, Mrs. Keats fluttering in their rear, and calling out at the top of her voice, which was just a little louder than the purring of her tabby cat.

As the driver of the van was deaf, however, the good women would certainly have lost their excursion, had not Allen good-naturedly started in chase. He was a swift runner, and soon managed to overtake and stop the van; when, once more, breathless and panting, they came up, and were duly

taken in—Allen assuring them, in answer to their protestations of gratitude, that they were kindly welcome, and turning back after he had closed the door upon them with a pleasant sense of having done a kind action.

He was rather surprised to find Charlie and Bessie on terms of established friendship with the old lady from the lodge, who, in her anxiety to hear how it fared with her friends in the distance, had applied to them for information, and had been comforted by hearing that the van had been stopped, and, as Charlie briefly expressed it, "they were all right."

"The spectacles helps me a deal, my dear," she said, in explanation to Bessie; "but to see them far-off things, at my time of life, would require a telescope at each eye, which I'm not possessed of."

Bessie, who had been allowed to look through Mr. Anderson's telescope at the last school-treat, was inwardly considering how Mrs. Keats could, even if she did possess them, employ two such instruments in the

manner suggested, when Allen's return changed the subject of conversation.

"Was they much in a fluster, my dear?" inquired the good lady. "I was; you might have knocked me down with a feather."

Allen admitted the fluster, but added, in the way of consolation, that, "once they were in the van, they seemed comfortable enough."

"And to think," continued Mrs. Keats, "that they'd have lost their day, and never got to Mapleden at all, if it hadn't been along of you! What would Mary Jane's mother have done?"

As no answer suggested itself to the boys, Bessie took courage, and whispered that she thought perhaps Mary Jane's mother would have cried; and the old lady was so pleased with the intelligence and good feeling displayed by the little girl, that she at once invited her and her companions to come into the lodge, and hear her parrot say, "How do you do?" in a voice "so natural, my dear, that you would think it was your own."

The children felt they were having quite an adventure when they found themselves in

the little sitting-room, where Poll, in her large cage, formed the most conspicuous ornament. And, although even Bessie's polite desire to agree with her new friend could not betray her into any confusion of the parrot's voice with her own, she went so far as to admit that it was not unlike that of a gruff old man. In which opinion she was further strengthened when the bird, abandoning the "Pretty Poll," and "How do you do?" lesson, began, with great distinctness, "Take a pipe, my dear! You know you smoke! Take a pipe, my dear!"

"I never did!" exclaimed poor Mrs. Keats, amid peals of laughter from the boys; while Bessie, who was afraid it was rude to laugh, and understood the old lady to mean she did not smoke, hastened to express her full belief in the assurance. "The memory of that bird beats everything. It's more than a month ago Roger promised me he'd never teach it that no more; and he keeps his word does Roger, though he has his fun; and now, to think the creature hasn't forgotten a word of it all!"

No! it certainly had not forgotten, and Mrs. Keats, growing hotter and hotter as the repetition of "You know you smoke!" filled her with a sense of unjust accusations, drew the entertainment to a close by taking her guests out into the grounds, and giving them full leave to amuse themselves about the place, "feeling sure," she said, "that they would do no mischief, but behave as they had done already" (she did not know of that blackboard), "much to the credit of those who had brought them up."

In and out under the flickering shadows of the elm-trees; in and out amongst the opening ferns, and the scented blue-bells, and the budding hazel-bushes; it was a game worth playing, this exploration of new territories, and our trio did not soon weary of it, or of repeating to each other what a remarkable circumstance it was that they should be ranging thus freely through the usually closely-guarded grounds of Hethering Park, accessible only to such favoured personages as were in a position to apply for "cards to view" at Mr. Torcloud's office.

They made the best of their opportunities, rambling from one part to another, and following up all such little paths as they had on former occasions looked at from the other side of the wall, with the wish that they might go there without fear of trespass.

At last they found themselves standing under a great chesnut tree directly in front of the house, whose low sweeping branches suggested opportunities of climbing almost irresistible to the boys, though they nobly denied themselves in deference to Bessie's extreme alarm at the idea of being left without their protection.

"But see, Charlie!" exclaimed Allen, who was fertile in resources, "we can help her up here, and then there's a jolly place for us all to sit in together."

Talk of the luxury of arm-chairs, couches, sofas! What is there comparable to the finished enjoyment we derived in our young days from some angular, hard, rough perch among the lower branches of a favourite tree, whereon we balanced ourselves in momentary peril of falling backwards from the treachery

of the bough behind, or forwards from the absence of any sure foothold in front, and yet rejoiced in our throne all the more from its very insecurity.

Bessie was of opinion that nothing in the form of enjoyment could come up to hers, in the serene position into which she was speedily helped, and proclaimed instantly that the finest view of the house was to be had from that and from no other. "What a great big house it is too!" she continued, after exacting a promise from Charlie, higher up, that he would keep his feet quiet, and from Allen, further along her own bough, that he would not shake without giving notice.

"*Mansion* you should say, not *house*," interposed Charlie. "This noble mansion, comprising spacious entrance hall, dining and drawing rooms. I've forgotten the rest."

"Eighteen bedrooms," chimed in Allen, "and schoolrooms and nurseries. What a lot of rooms. I wonder now what people can do with them all."

"Sleep in the bedrooms," suggested

Charlie, "but the others—well, the dining-room would be for dining in."

"And the drawing-room for drawing in," added Bessie, by a happy inspiration. "I know though which I would like," she continued, "that nice little room that seems to grow out of the corner, and has windows looking every way. I wouldn't like things always big and grand."

"You wouldn't be let choose," said Allen, "gentlefolks' children's always in the nursery or the schoolroom—at least your size is. There's little Miss Florence Anderson now, she's as big as you, and I've seen her once in the nursery and once in the schoolroom at the Rectory, it was bringing back the rocking-horse first, and mending the schoolroom window blind the other time."

Allen made the observation with some slight magnificence in his tone, for he had been only six months apprenticed to his uncle—a carpenter—with whom he lived, and he was not unmindful of the superiority of his position in the matter of dignity to that of his playfellow, Charlie, who had not yet left

school; it was rather pleasant to speak in a passing manner of the experience which came to him in the way of his profession.

"I wonder how people feel when they live in a big house like that," said Bessie.

"Wouldn't it be jolly if we were rich children and lived there!" exclaimed Charlie, with such an excited movement of his feet as constituted a distinct breach of the treaty. "I should be a school-boy, I shouldn't be in the nursery like you, and I should have my pony and ride out every day. Bessie, you could have a rocking-horse, because it wouldn't be safe for you to go on a real one."

"Thank you, Charlie," answered Bessie doubtfully; "but if it were very small, and quiet of course, I'd rather have a pony too, —white I should like best. Oh! I wish we were rich really, and not only talking about it."

"I don't see how you could ride out every day, Charlie, if you were at school," argued Allen. "I believe they do dreadfully hard lessons in the schools gentlefolks' children go to. I'd rather not be a child at all, but a

grown-up gentleman, and have the mansion and all the rest of it for my own. Then I could have horses, and lots of fruit, and everything to do what I liked with. I'd let you both go out riding, too, when you came to see me."

It was such a bold flight of imagination, that Bessie felt quite startled. Being "grown-up," seemed in itself to be such a very long way off, and then being grown-up, and coming to visit at such a beautiful mansion as the one before her, at which she once more looked quite affectionately from amongst the branches; and going out riding—she wondered what it would feel like—and drew a long breath as she vainly attempted to fancy it might come true. Just at this moment she caught sight, however, not of the milk-white steed she had been picturing to herself, but of a little pony-carriage being driven quietly up the avenue by a gentleman, with a boy and girl beside him on the front seat, and accompanied by good Mrs. Keats as a sort of outrider on foot, with whom they were holding conversation.

"We must get down," said Allen promptly, with an instinctive perception that their appearance in one of the most conspicuous trees might occasion some surprise to visitors coming to view the estate. "They'd see us all up here from the front door;" and, as he spoke, he was helping Bessie to scramble to the ground, while Charlie, agile as a monkey, had swung himself down almost before the others could look round.

Their intention to slip quietly away without being noticed was, however, defeated; for Mrs. Keats, who seemed to be looking in every direction for them, presently caught sight of them, and beckoned vehemently.

"I wonder now what's she's wanting with us!" exclaimed Charlie. "It would be jolly if she wished to show us over the house along with those other people."

"As if she'd think of such a thing with the gentlefolks!" replied Allen, who felt that his experiences at the Rectory and elsewhere had given him an insight which could scarcely be expected from his companion.

But Mrs. Keats did not leave them time

for further surmising; her voice was heard the moment they came near—

"Could you come and hold the gentleman's horses for a bit, while he's looking over the house?"

The inquiry was addressed to Allen in particular, though the three came up together.

"You'll find them quite quiet," added the gentleman, who was standing on the gravel road with the reins in his hand. "My ponies might be trusted almost to take care of themselves, until the groom comes back that I've had to send to Hethering for a parcel that was left behind; but perhaps it's safest to leave some one in charge."

Allen hastened to assure him of his readiness to do what was asked, and was rather glad to find that he was to sit in the carriage, and not stand immediately in front of the ponies, after the fashion of Lady Hensbury's groom; for whom he had always felt a sincere compassion when he had noticed him outside the chief shop at Hethering, in a position to be inevitably run over if anything had happened to startle the horses.

"And this little maiden would like to sit beside you," continued the gentleman, looking kindly at Bessie, and lifting the astonished little girl on to the seat. "You'll like to be by your brother, my dear."

And Bessie had not recovered from her surprise before the pleasant-spoken gentleman proceeded to ask Mrs. Keats whether all three were her children? the answer to this inquiry being, however, lost through the creaking of the massive door, which, as it opened, revealed to view the "spacious entrance-hall" adverted to on Mr. Torcloud's black board; within that hall he and Mrs. Keats disappeared.

In the meantime the little pair, who had dismounted from the carriage, were standing on the steps contemplating our young friends, and instituting that mental comparison of age, size, and the like, without which I think it may be safely affirmed that stranger children never encounter each other, and which was the more natural in this case, inasmuch as they seemed a fair match in all respects for Bessie and Charlie. This was, in fact,

the conclusion at which they had just arrived when their father, looking out from the doorway, called to them—

"Ethel! Percy! How am I to look over this great house unless you come to help me?" And in a moment both children had sprung to his side, and each with a hand in his they passed into the house.

Bessie's eyes followed them. "She's just my size," she whispered to Allen, and then paused to catch the conversation as it came to them through the open door.

"Dear papa, you promised I should have a room for my own, now I'm getting a great girl. I'd like to have roses growing on it."

"We must put you in the garden at once, Ethel, if you want to be where the roses grow. I daresay the gardener would find you a bed."

"I mean outside it, papa; roses growing over the window," resumed Ethel's silvery voice, while Percy followed—

"And the stable for my pony, papa; we must see about that."

"And mine too," chimed in Ethel; "you

know you said you'd let me have a pony when we went to live in the new house, dear papa."

"Such a pair of chatterers as I have with me," was the reply, "I think a magpie's nest will be the next thing we shall have to ask for."

"That would be very nice indeed; I should like that very much, dear papa," said Ethel, with perfect sincerity, and the children outside heard no more, for the party were now passing on from the entrance-hall to explore the "noble drawing and dining rooms," and other apartments before enumerated, leaving the trio outside to their own reflections.

Bessie's reflections, had they condensed themselves into words, would have been much to this effect:—"I'm as big as Ethel, and I think about the same age; if I were a lady I suppose that's just what I should have been. I wonder whether she wears that blue silk dress every day, and whether she ever spills her tea upon it? She'd not mend it if she tore it ever so much, I daresay; not like me, having to stop in a whole hour yesterday at that tiresome skirt of mine. She's going to have just what I was wanting up in the

tree; a room to herself, and a pony—perhaps a white one—" and at this moment Bessie's reflections broke forth into speech:—

"So you see, Allen, I'd not have been in the nursery after all."

Her companion stared. "What *do* you mean, Bessie?"

"I mean just what I said, Allen" (there was the least possible touch of crossness in her tone), "I can't make it plainer; I'd have had a room to myself, and *not* have been in the nursery."

Allen, upon whom the previous conversation had left no very strong impression, was in undiminished perplexity; and Charlie, who remembered it perfectly, but meant to be aggravating, broke in with—

"Don't mind her, Allen, she's going to pout," and at the same moment produced so loud a crack with the whip, which he had contrived to secure, that he very nearly succeeded in starting off the ponies.

Bessie was terrified; and what with imploring Allen to hold the reins tightly, and Charlie to surrender the whip, and then reali-

zing to herself what a hair-breadth escape she had experienced, worked off her displeasure, and proceeded to explain, quite gently, the various links which had led her to that conclusion of hers, that had sounded so puzzling, as to her "not being in the nursery after all."

In the meantime Charlie, having given up the whip, was left with idle hands, and we all know that employment for such is not long in coming. It came to him in the form of the slightly-open hall door, which was found to yield easily to pressure, gradually opening wider and wider as Charlie pushed with greater decision, until at last he followed its inward swing and found himself standing in the spacious entrance-hall.

"Oh, don't! don't!" screamed Bessie, as she looked up and saw what was happening.

"Why not?" returned Charlie, with growing courage; "I'd like to have a look at the place too."

"You had better not," urged Allen, in obedience to a secret poke from Bessie, whose affection was conjuring up all sorts of possible and impossible dangers.

But Charlie's answer came defiantly: "That's just because you've got the ponies to mind, and can't come too." And perhaps it was. Then, with a playful wave of the hand, the boy disappeared.

The next thing that happened was the arrival of the groom from Hethering, and almost at the same moment the gentleman looked out from the door to direct that the carriage should meet him at the lodge, as he wished to walk through the grounds.

"Let them stay in," he said, with a glance at Allen and Bessie, "they'll enjoy the drive."

It was rather pleasant, certainly, to be driven off at the ponies' fastest trot through the park; and Bessie, in the glory of her unwonted position, almost forgot to feel anxious about Charlie. But when the visitors had gone, and they had waited for some time in the avenue, had looked all about in every direction, and still he did not appear, they began to feel seriously uneasy, and at last determined once more to retrace their steps up to the entrance of the house.

CHAPTER II.

CHARLIE'S ADVENTURE.

MRS. KEATS returned by a short cut through the shrubbery to the lodge. It was getting near tea-time, so she stirred up the fire in her snug little sitting-room, and laid out the tea-things; and, as soon as the water was boiling, infused her tea and put it upon the hob to brew. There would just be time, she bethought herself, before it would attain a suitable degree of excellence, for her usual visit to the poultry-yard.

Thus it came to pass that she was out of hearing when, a few moments later, Allen and Bessie knocked at the door, and, on getting no answer, ventured to push it open, and look round the room in search of her. They had been unsuccessful in finding their lost

companion, and were in utter bewilderment as to what they should do next to recover him.

"How comfortable it looks!" said Bessie, surveying the little tea-table, with its loaf of home-made bread, and pat of yellow butter, to which the teapot from the hob seemed whispering a friendly tune. "It would be so pleasant, if it wasn't wrong, to sit down and have our tea there. I wish fairy stories were true. In them people always have the things they come to, and it isn't stealing."

Bessie spoke as of an ascertained code of morals, and with inward yearnings towards the bread and butter.

"Who are you?" exclaimed an abrupt voice, which made both the invaders start; and Allen began an explanation—

"If you please, we were looking——"

"Go away! Go away!" And the voice sounded so fierce that Bessie was terrified; until Allen, with a peal of laughter, exclaimed,

"It's only the parrot, Bessie. We might have known his voice again."

But, though somewhat reassured, Bessie was no longer comfortable in the snug little

parlour. The voice of the parrot seemed to her as the voice of conscience testifying against those covetous desires of Mrs. Keats' bread and butter of which she had been inwardly guilty; and when, after waiting a little longer, that good lady failed to make her appearance, she urged the possibility of Charlie having in some way reached home before them.

"I think the parrot was right," she said, humbly disclaiming any originality in the suggestion. "We'd better go."

Allen glanced at the clock, and consented.

"It 'll be past my tea-time even now, when we get home," he observed, as they went down the lane; "so I'll have to go without; for Mrs. Watts always says, when she lets me out Saturdays, 'You'll have your victuals if you're in time; and if not, don't look to having anything kept for you.' The gentleman's sixpence will get me something."

All the way back to Hethering, Allen and his little companion built themselves up in the idea that they would find Charlie safely established in the bosom of his family, when they

reached No. 5, Myrtle Row, where the Westfalls lived—the only other alternative, that he might have got shut up in the great house, seemed too alarming to be entertained; and consequently it came upon them quite as a shock when they found, on arriving, that no one had seen or heard of the missing boy.

Mrs. Westfall took his disappearance to heart grievously, picturing to herself all the terrible things which might have been happening to him, and arriving at an immediate conclusion that he was indeed a prisoner at Hethering Hall, possibly getting into many difficulties and doing much mischief there. And, although she was too good a wife to allow her husband to depart in search of the child without "just a snatch of something," in which Allen was happily called to participate, she permitted no unnecessary delay before starting Mr. Westfall and Allen off together for Hethering Hall. "She would make it all straight," she said, "with Mrs. Watts about Allen's staying out, and so he needn't mind about that; but they must just go at once, and be as quick as they could."

The peculiarity of his mission weighed heavily upon Mr. Westfall's spirits as they pursued their silent way along the Mapleden Road. His wife's parting words—" Boys is boys, and every minute Charlie's left loose about that place, in which you may depend he's been and got shut up, is enough to break one's heart, with no one to bid him mind the china and glass ; there's no telling what damage he hasn't been and gone and done " —dwelt much in Mr. Westfall's mind, and at once quickened the good man's steps, and heightened his anxiety ; so that when at last Allen broke silencè by saying he wondered how Charlie liked being where he was, it was with perfect truthfulness the shopman replied, " A great deal better than I like the trouble he's giving me."

They reached the lodge at last. The door was opened to them by a tall, hearty young man, whom Allen at once put down in his mind as the " Roger " they had heard of, and for whom doubtless the second place at the table was laid. To him Mr. Westfall addressed himself. He had been mentally

conning over various forms of explanation, all of which forsook him at the moment they were wanted, so that he had nothing for it but to come straight to the business in hand, though inwardly much embarrassed. "I'd be much obliged to you, sir," he said, "if you could kindly let me have the key of the house (if it's a trouble to you to step that way yourself), my boy Charlie being I think inside of it, and his mother all in an anxiety of having him home, and I've come to fetch him."

Roger was perhaps justified in the low whistle of surprise with which he greeted so unusual a request.

"Want the key of the house!" he said, looking dubiously at the strangers; "and your boy's inside of it!"

"Yes," replied Mr. Westfall anxiously, "my boy Charlie, he's got shut up in it we think; this one isn't mine, he's only come along with me to fetch the other!"

"Come along with you to fetch the other!" still repeated Roger, who seemed to have caught the habit of imitation from the parrot.

Here Allen, however, broke in with a hasty explanation, which caused Roger to call to some one within. "Mother, just come here, there's an odd piece of work which maybe you'll understand better than I do."

It was an irreverent designation of their mission, but Allen forgave it in the extreme comfort which Mrs. Keats' personal appearance on the scene, and immediate recognition of himself, inspired.

Mr. and Mrs. Westfall had been not a little astonished at the event of the afternoon; Roger, in his turn, had been surprised; but all this was as nothing in comparison with the utter and unfeigned amazement with which Mrs. Keats at last grasped the situation.

That through her instrumentality a boy, and, as if that were not enough, a stranger boy upon whom she had never set eyes until that afternoon, should have been admitted within that most scrupulously protected mansion; that he should be even then at large within it; that he should be there too without so much as one grown-up person to tell him where he might go and where he mightn't;

it seemed almost too alarming a fact to be true; and it must be confessed that, while Mr. Westfall's first thought was of his imprisoned boy, Mrs. Keats' most anxious consideration was for the invaded house of which she was for that day the custodian.

Looking at the matter, however, from either point of view, one thing was clear, namely, that the sooner it could be cleared up the better; and so the young man was immediately entrusted with the key, and, in company with Mr. Westfall and Allen, set forth up the avenue.

Directly they found themselves within the spacious entrance-hall, Roger, who was of a practical turn, exclaimed, "Shout!" An energetic but distant response was heard to Allen's prolonged "Charlie-e-e!" and it came from a direction which seemed at once to decide Roger in what part of the building they ought to look.

"He must have been and got into the schoolroom wing," he observed, pausing for a moment's reflection, while Mr. Westfall rejoined that, if that were the case, the school-

room wing must be a good way off, for it sounded as though Charlie's voice might have gone to Hethering and back.

"We'll have to go a long way round to get there," resumed Roger, throwing open one of the doors, and leading the way. "We can't go, so to say, straight through, not having all the keys."

It certainly would have been impossible to have designated as straight the very devious course by which Roger piloted them, through rooms and corridors, great and small, in the direction ultimately of Charlie's voice. But Allen was far from regretting this circumstance, inasmuch as he was thereby afforded, strictly in the path of duty and without any fear of disgrace, a view of all the principal apartments in Hethering Hall.

The first they entered was the state dining-room, concerning which their guide, in momentary forgetfulness of the circumstances of the case, began the usual address to visitors :—"In this spacious room a banquet could be served to a large assembly, while at the same time its fittings render it suitable for

the private use of a small family. You will find——"

At this point, however, happening to remember that, in the present case, his companions were not likely to find anything on the premises but the lost boy of whom they were in search, he broke off abruptly, and began whistling a tune.

Allen, however, took note of the information, and looked curiously round at the wainscotted walls, the oaken floor, and the deep windows, with their quaintly-carved woodwork, wondering within himself why, and in what particulars, the apartment was specially adapted for the very large or very small party suggested. They passed on into the state drawing-room.

"There's not another to equal it in the county," observed Roger, relapsing slightly into the showman, as he noticed his companions' admiration; "what with mirrors, and carpets, and curtains, and view from the window to match."

Following the order suggested, Allen's eyes sought out first the pier-glasses, which

placed opposite to each other, secured, by their reflections, the appearance of an endless gallery of splendid apartments similar to the one in which they were standing; and then the carpet with its velvet softness and delicately graduated shades of green, harmonizing and yet contrasting with the rich silken folds of the crimson window curtains, concerning which Mr. Westfall threw an additional light by saying that he had sold material not exceeding it in richness, as a dress piece to a lady of title.

It was impossible to resist stealing one glance from the window itself—a large bow window looking out to the south-west, and commanding an extensive view of the country side, which justified any amount of praise that could be bestowed upon it. Down below the undulating grounds of the park, and the woods, in their fresh spring foliage, you could see the clustering houses of the little town of Hethering in the valley; the old grey church tower rising above them, and blushing rosy red in the evening sunlight; and the winding folds of the Hether gleaming in and out

amongst the meadows, and reflecting the roseate tints of the sky. Then the sky itself. Was there ever a more beautiful sunsetting—a more gorgeous display of purples and crimsons—a more lavish decking with burnished gold—of those distant clouds which seemed to have gathered like courtiers around the departing monarch of the sky!

Allen lingered, his eyes fixed upon the glowing amber light that bathed the western horizon. He felt he had never seen anything so beautiful in all his life. He had thought that just before when he entered the drawing-room, and had exclaimed loudly in admiration of its magnificence. But now, as he turned regretfully from the window and once more looked around, saying to himself over and over like a tune, "mirrors, carpets, and curtains; view from the window to match," it may have been that his eyes were somewhat dazzled, for things certainly looked dimmer than at first, and it was only with an effort that he brought himself to realize that the setting of the mirrors might be of gold and look no brighter; and the carpet *did* feel

like velvet under his feet; and the curtains—well, it was impossible to forget the dress-length purchased by the lady of title, and—yes, Roger was right—it *was* all beautiful together, as he had said; only, Allen thought, as they continued their way along the corridor, the view from the window was better than all the rest put together.

Further on, up a long flight of stairs, Charlie was found at last, and in the school-room wing, just as Roger had predicted. Had the boy chosen his place of imprisonment with a special view to the self-infliction of punishment, he could not have made a more appropriate selection, inasmuch as the door which Mrs. Keats had unwittingly closed upon him was that of a lobby at the entrance of the school-room suite, as it was called, and which led nowhere else. The door of the school-room was also fastened, so that, except the rather barren amusement of going up and down the one flight of stairs, Charlie had been cut off from every possible variation of the monotony of his confinement; the windows even which lighted the passage being above

reach, and affording only a distant glimpse of the tops of the elm trees. Add to this absence of all resources, the terrors which had beset the poor boy's mind as to the possible results of his enterprise, which he dismally narrated to Allen as they went out, and it must be fairly admitted that the culprit had been sufficiently punished without any further trouble being taken by those in authority over him.

It was with quite a sigh of relief that he felt himself once more in the open air.

"Oh! Allen," he said, "you can't think how wretched I was. It seemed as if in that big place I might just starve and die out and nobody ever think where I was. And then, too, I thought, supposing those people from Mapleden came back, it would be at night, and if I did shout, they'd think I was a burglar or a ghost, and perhaps shoot me without stopping to ask."

"I never heard of a ghost being shot," was Allen's matter-of-fact rejoinder.

"You may laugh," Charlie continued; "but you wouldn't if you had been me; and

thinking, too, about supposing there had been a fire and I should have been shut up and not able to get out."

There was no doubt that Charlie's fears had been very real, and Allen in a measure sympathized with them, especially when he heard that over and above these, there had been the previous disappointment of seeing very little of the beauties of the Hall. Locked doors had come in the adventurer's way in every direction, and up to that moment he could not tell how he had contrived to reach the spot where eventually he had found himself shut up; only he knew he had passed through none of these rooms that Allen talked of, and had seen nothing worth mentioning.

It is to be recorded, much to Mrs. Keats' credit, that her feelings of humanity triumphed over those other feelings of distress and responsibility with which she had first listened to Mr. Westfall's story; and that, even before she had received the gratifying intelligence that the boy had done no mischief, she had prepared for his comfort and refreshment a

good slice of that very home-made bread and butter which Bessie had coveted, and which Charlie attested afterwards to be "the nicest he had ever eaten;" and that further, on receiving back the key, she even petitioned for his full forgiveness, in consideration of what he had already suffered, and said she would not be afraid of having him and his companions another day, if they liked, to come and walk in the park.

CHAPTER III.

PUZZLING THOUGHTS CONCERNING OTHER MANSIONS.

CHARLIE had very little to say for himself when he reached home; much less, indeed, than might have been reasonably expected from a boy who had been spending some hours in the stateliest mansion in the county. All the glowing descriptions, to which Bessie and the other five little Westfalls listened with eagerness, were from Allen, who was full of the wonders he had seen, and was very glad that Mrs. Westfall had got leave for him to stay until nine o'clock, so that he could linger and chat with his friends.

Presently Bessie enlisted him to hear her repeat her lesson for the next day. She was very particular about her Sunday-school, and had not lost a mark since the year began.

"Charlie's no use," she observed; "he's never ready with his own; and mother's busy to-day."

So Allen sat down upon one of the steps leading into the little garden, so as to get all the light possible, and, taking Bessie's Testament in his hand, heard her repeat the verses she had just finished learning. They were said slowly and reverently; for Bessie was a thoughtful child, and had been well instructed:—

"Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Me: in My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know."

A pause; Bessie had forgotten, and Allen had to tell her the next words. Then she remembered it all, and continued:—

"Thomas saith unto Him, Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am

the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me."

Bessie stretched out her hand for the Testament.

"Thank you, Allen, I shall know it all right now; there was only that one place I forgot, and I shan't forget it again."

"They're nice-sounding words," Allen said, as he handed the book back, after marking which chapter it was; and there was a little bit of a sigh as he spoke.

"Yes," replied the child; "and they're much easier to learn, too, than our last; I seem to have heard them so often before. Allen—I wonder—do you think things in the Bible are the same as they are really, and the mansions like what they are in this world—like that one you've been in and I've looked at from outside?"

"I don't know," replied Allen thoughtfully. "You see, a *mansion* like what we mean is bigger than a *house*. There's a board up along this row, and it says only a 'House to Let;' they don't put *mansion* unless it's bigger and rather grand."

"I see," said Bessie, pondering; "then it's not the same in the Bible, because it says, 'In My Father's house are many mansions;' so the house there must be the biggest, as the mansions are in it."

"Perhaps that's the way in Heaven," suggested Allen; "and then, if the mansions are like houses, and there are a great many, it would come to a town——"

"The city!" interrupted Bessie, eagerly, "there's all about it in the last chapters of the Revelation—the golden streets, and the pearly gates, and the river of the Water of Life. I'll ask Teacher about it to-morrow; she's sure to know." Bessie reposed an implicit confidence in her teacher's acquaintance with all subjects connected with the other world.

"Mother used to say that verse, Bessie," said Allen, with a choke in his voice; "I've heard her repeat it, and she's made me read it to her ever so often before she died: it seemed like hearing *her* when you said it over just now."

"Perhaps she went There," whispered

Bessie, softly, wanting to say something that would make Allen less sorrowful.

"Perhaps!" replied the boy quickly, "Why, Bessie, she knew all about it, and told me of her going there quite sure and certain, just as I might talk of going home to-night; there was no *perhaps* with her. I can just remember her saying people might likely wonder to think of a poor woman like her having such a Home to go to; but, as Jesus had said it, she'd be wrong not to believe it."

"I wonder how she knew that?" murmured Bessie, looking straight out before her into the garden, and thinking; "I suppose, though, she was very good."

"Of course she was."

"And then," continued Bessie, "that was why she knew it. You see, good people go there, and bad people don't."

At this moment, Mrs. Westfall's voice was heard calling to the little girl, who rose at once and wished "Good night!" saying, as she took leave of her companion, "You'll be in good time to-morrow?" and adding softly,

"And I've some white lilies in my own little garden saving for you to put on her grave."

Allen also got up, took leave of the rest of the party, and walked slowly towards his home, the words repeating themselves over and over again in his mind, as was often the way in his case when anything struck him:—"In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you." Those old familiar words had awakened memories of long ago, which, in the pensive evening hour, came upon him with an unusual force. It seemed as if he could almost see the pale face and drooping figure of his mother, as they brought her back to him like what he remembered her in her last illness, and hear her gentle voice repeating the verses she loved so well.

Allen could not remember his father, who had died when he was a baby. Then his mother had supported herself and him by dress-making; and latterly they had both lived with her brother, the Uncle Watts of whom mention has been already made. In his hands Mrs. Galbraith, before her death,

placed a sum of money, to be employed in apprenticing her boy, when old enough, to his uncle's trade; Mr. Watts promising, in the meantime, to take care of him as though he were his own son, a promise he had conscientiously fulfilled.

Things had seemed dreary after his mother's death; and, before very long, his uncle, who was a widower, had married again. The new Mrs. Watts had told Allen he need not trouble to call her "aunt." She was a stirring capable person, versed in domestic business, and managing all things in a saving spirit, which enabled her, as she often found occasion to remark, "to put by something against a rainy day, and be beholden to no one for gruel or medicine if she were ill." She was, moreover, an honest, upright woman, of respected character, and regular in the outward observance of her religious duties. But —and if we leave a blank, it is one Allen would very readily have filled up—other graces and virtues, by no means inconsistent with those already mentioned, were wanting; and, while respected by some, she was loved

by very few, and, amongst those few, Allen, who could never imagine why his uncle married her, was not numbered.

How often the lad found himself wishing that his mother had lived, picturing in his mind the difference she would have made in every part of his life, and longing, with a sort of intensity which he could not explain, for the motherly love and sympathy there was no one now to give. These thoughts all appertained to the graver side of his character, which was just beginning to develop; the more childish side was still in force when he was with his old playfellows, the Westfalls; and, indeed, at all times, he was wont to banish serious reflections as speedily as might be, by throwing himself earnestly into the occupation or amusement of the moment.

On this Saturday evening, however, serious thoughts refused to be banished. Some of his mother's parting words had come back to him besides those of which he had told Bessie—earnest words, spoken shortly before she died, telling him that he too must have a place in the Father's house of many man-

sions; that, amongst all the white-robed company of Heaven, she was sure she could never forget the little boy she was leaving upon earth, but should look for his coming by and by; and that, though there would be difficulties and temptations on the way, there was a Friend able and willing to keep him from falling, and bring him safe at last. Allen remembered it all as if it had been yesterday, and how she had bidden him avoid bad company, remember to keep the Sabbath-day holy, and never forget to pray to God night and morning, until by and by they should be together once more in the Home where there would be no more partings.

And at this point the question flashed all at once into Allen's mind quite clear and distinct, and as though it claimed an answer. Would it be so? Was he indeed on his way to the House of many mansions? Had *he* any reason to think there was a place prepared for him?

He was quite at a loss for the true reply, though troubled with a sore misgiving as to what it might be. Bessie had said good

people went there—and bad people didn't. She must have meant very, *very* good people, like the ones in the Bible, and like his mother. But then *he* was not at all like them. Perhaps it might mean other people rather good, like —whom should he say—he paused to think of an illustration—like his uncle. Yes; Uncle Watts never missed morning and evening chapel on Sundays; he didn't have company like so many; he was sober and industrious, and would have cut off his hand rather than have done an act of dishonesty. He had always looked after him (Allen), and had taken care he should have no stint of food or clothing. Yes, his uncle, though nothing to compare with his mother, Allen thought, might be classed among the good. He had erred in marrying Mrs. Watts, but for this, perhaps, he would not be held accountable; marriage seemed like a sort of fate. But Mrs. Watts—no, *she* wasn't good; he was quite sure she wasn't, for all her fine management; and in this opinion he was much strengthened by the sound of her voice at this moment, as he reached the house:—

"You're late back, and everything's cleared away long since. Your boots have got to be blacked and done now, please; none of your loitering ways to-night. If it wasn't for me, there'd be Sabbath-breaking soon enough; it's one boy like another, all the world over."

"Why should she begin by scolding?" Allen thought within himself; but he said nothing, not because to reply would have been wrong, but simply because he had learnt by experience that in all word encounters Mrs. Watts came off incomparably the winner; her position enabling her to stop discussion at a moment favourable to herself, by a stern "I forbid another word;" and Mrs. Watts expected, and enforced obedience. So he put on his slippers in silence, and applied himself to his task, while his aunt commented in no very flattering terms upon his behaviour.

"Sullen," she said, glancing sharply at him to see that the work was being properly done; "sullen of course, which I said the moment I set eyes on you. John," says I, "I don't want no telling that boy's sullen."

And without waiting for a reply, in much self-gratulation as to her quickness of perception, Mrs. Watts went upstairs to lay out her husband's Sunday clothes.

Sullen, indeed! Allen reflected. Why, his quiet manner was grand in comparison with her harsh-speaking rudeness; proud, odious, disagreeable person that she was. There could be no manner of doubt about *her*, at all events, and *she* wasn't good; and she would never—no, never, he was quite sure of that—go up to where his mother was. It would be small heaven to anybody where *she* got in!

How about himself? The question came again: he had not dismissed it in deciding about his uncle and Mrs. Watts. He pondered as he rubbed and polished, and came to his first conclusion at the same moment that he finished off his first boot. And that conclusion was to the effect that he was much nicer and better in every way than Mrs. Watts, and stood a far better chance than she did of future happiness. The blacking of his second boot kept pace with a further comparison of

himself with his uncle. And this comparison also was not unfavourable to his own self-esteem. His uncle did not, of course, now commit childish faults; but no doubt he had in his time, when he was young, and very likely had not been different from other boys of his generation. On the whole, taking all things into consideration, he was inclined to the opinion that, for a boy, he (Allen) was quite as good as his uncle was for a man. And after arriving at this conviction, and at the polishing off of the second boot, he carried the pair upstairs, and proceeded to get ready for the night.

It was not his custom to read the Bible before going to bed; but on the present occasion he reached one down from the shelf with a sort of sudden impulse, and looked long and fondly at his mother's handwriting on the title-page. Her name was there, and his father's; and then his own, with the date of his birth. Underneath these, two passages of Scripture had been written at a later date. The first was John v. 24:—"Verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and be-

lieveth on Him that sent Me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." The second, 1 John i. 9, 7:—"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.....The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

Allen turned from these to the 14th chapter of St. John, and found the well-remembered passage Bessie had repeated all underlined. It had been marked with a trembling hand; but there was no tremble in the heart which had prompted the few words written at the foot of the page:—"I've found Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life; henceforth this is true for me." There was a date added, but of a time twelve years back, before Allen could remember.

He shut the book, put out his candle, and went to bed; but, contrary to his custom, lay awake for what seemed to him a long time thinking.

He was not quite at ease about himself. It was true that he had settled to his own

satisfaction that he was better than Mrs. Watts, and not inferior to his uncle in the matter of goodness. But that Bible had brought back recollections of his mother, of his mother's words, there was the record on its pages of her innermost, deepest feelings, and if being good enough to get to heaven meant anything approaching what his mother was, why, he was as far off from it as Mrs. Watts herself.

First it occurred to him that perhaps it was her being ill and dying that made the difference. But then those words were written in her Bible long before ill health set in: besides, he could remember her strong and active during all his early childish days, and she was just the same then as during her long decline; speaking of Jesus as her Saviour, and of Heaven as her Home, long before there was a notion of her dying sooner than other people of her age. She had always taught her child to say his prayers night and morning, and had spoken to him when he did anything wrong of Jesus being grieved. Allen remembered it all quite well, and habit had

become a second nature to him, so that he rarely forgot to utter a short morning and evening prayer. But then after all *was this enough?* was this being "good"? The last half hour before bedtime was still rankling in his mind. It was true that Mrs. Watts had been intensely provoking, but then had *he* been blameless? He had indeed restrained his words, but had there not been hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness in his heart? his thoughts would have made up an ample share in the angriest altercation, and those thoughts had been restrained from breaking into words only by the knowledge that it would be the worse for him if he spoke. No, he supposed he was not good.

Still, if to be good meant never doing, saying, or even thinking, anything that was wrong, who was good? He had come back to his original question, and was inclined to think that, in this sense, even Mr. Watts did not come up to the standard, and indeed he could not think of anybody that did, perhaps not even his mother, though she was different; but then she was not here to explain things

to him, and Allen grew weary of thinking, and tried to persuade himself that at all events he was as good as others, and that if he strove to do his duty, and get on with his work, and by and by became a respectable tradesman, he should do as well as any one else in this world, and fare no worse than others in that which was to come.

Sleep put an end to his reflections, and in his dreams his mother, clothed in white robes, seemed to him to be standing at the entrance of Hethering Hall, and beckoning to him to follow her in. They passed through the various rooms, and corridors, to the great drawing-room; and then she stood in the bow-window, and, pointing from thence to the sunset clouds, said softly, "The real glory is still to come, the King of glory is drawing near, and the heavenly mansions." Then the living gold of the western sky appeared to grow more and more brilliant, and nearer and nearer came a radiant brightness that seemed to envelop everything; his mother's white robe shone with a dazzling beauty, but his own dress was just what he had on the day

before, and a sudden dim recollection came over him of his waking perplexities ; he started with fear, and, with the words on his lips, "Oh! mother, will they let me in?" awoke to find a flood of sunshine was streaming in at his little window and bathing his pillow. It was Sunday morning, and he had slept on later than usual.

CHAPTER IV.

TALKING IT OVER WITH BESSIE.

SUNDAY morning! with its chiming bells, its gathering groups of school children, its busy mustering of teachers, its quiet proclamation of rest in the houses of our labouring poor; how sweet and blessed are the associations which cling to all its familiar details in the hearts of countless numbers of our English people!

Yet it cannot be denied that, among the ranks of the young especially, are to be found many to whom Sunday is by no means the best day in all the seven, but who, in the secret of their hearts, would be exceedingly glad could it be missed out of the calendar, and Mondays made to succeed Saturdays all the year round without other interruption than that of secular holidays.

Of this number was Allen, but he did

not confide his private views on the subject to any one, not even to his intimate friends Charlie and Bessie. For they liked Sundays; Bessie especially, whose Sunday teaching furnished material for enjoyment that extended beyond school hours; Charlie too, though with occasional drawbacks, in the shape of marks forfeited for talkativeness or imperfectly-learnt lessons. Then their home doings were pleasant; there was a country walk after afternoon school, a picture Bible in the evening, and interesting Sunday books from the library. If the elder children went to Church with their father, besides the glory of sitting up so much later than their usual bedtime, there was a supper of bread and cheese in prospect, the anticipation of which went far to counterbalance weariness during the sermon. So that, as has been said, the Westfalls liked Sundays, and could not have entered into Allen's feeling that even a common week-day was pleasanter, with work as usual; that Sunday was dull and disagreeable, and he always felt more tired at the end of it than at any other time.

Mr. Watts was of opinion that to keep a boy out of that mischief to which he was at all times, and under all circumstances, prone, it was necessary to have your eye upon him constantly; and, with an honest and earnest desire to do as well as he could by his orphan nephew, he acted consistently in his management of him upon this principle. He always took him with him on Sundays to both the Chapel services, and as he was employed to close the doors and perform some other functions at the Chapel, this involved staying to any after-meetings there might be, and filled up the greater part of the morning and afternoon.

The remaining margin of time was generally spent in the little parlour, which, from its never being used on week-days, and containing, besides, all the possessions of the family intended for show, from the japanned tea-tray to the elaborate sampler which testified to Mrs. Watts's powers with her needle, exercised a very solemnizing influence upon its occupants, producing a feeling of restraint and ceremony, which they never admitted to

themselves, but bore in silence, as a thing that had been and must be.

Allen used to wonder whether if the things were sometimes moved it would make a difference: he had suggested that, instead of the best china being laid out on a shelf as for a tea-party that never came off, they should put it into use at their Sunday tea; he had even ventured to attack the assortment of books, which, arranged in exact order of size one upon the other, made an ornamental pyramid, having for its base a large family Bible, and for its apex a diamond edition of the "Pilgrim's Progress." But these innovations were not regarded with favour by Mrs. Watts, and were suppressed.

He could remember things being different in his mother's time, a much greater air of freedom and happiness prevailing; he wondered whether it could be only that he had grown older and soberer since then, and so everything else seemed changed? In those days he used to be sent to the infant-class at the Sunday-school; his mother would call for him on her way to church, and there,

although the Service was long, he comforted himself when tired by nestling close up to her side, enjoying the singing, and watching all that went on, and thinking by-and-by it would be over, and he should be having his Sunday dinner, and then looking at the pictures in the Bible. In the afternoon, often, while his mother talked with Mr. Watts, he would be playing with the kitten, which he steadily maintained to be a Sunday toy, since God made it; or they sometimes took a long country walk among the lanes, and came home with their hands filled with wild flowers.

In point of fact, Allen himself had changed as well as the circumstances of his lot. He had outgrown the tastes of a little child, and he had not acquired any real enjoyment of those Sunday services and occupations to which, as a matter of habit and compulsion, he was obliged to devote the Sunday hours; they were a weariness and a trouble to him, and he woke up happier than usual on Mondays, because Monday morning was the most distant point possible from Sunday,

The only exceptions to this rule were the

Sundays he was allowed to go to the Westfalls. On the present occasion, consequently, it was with a brighter face than usual that, after dressing as quickly as possible, he appeared at the breakfast-table, and set out soon afterwards for the Chapel with Mr. Watts, who had to be there early. He was still in a somewhat thoughtful mood, and found himself wondering, as they passed the Church, what the difference between it and Chapel was, and why grown-up people went to either; for, he thought, if they had only the honesty to say so, they probably would confess they did not like it. Perhaps they did it to escape going to hell; only then his mother was never afraid of hell, that he could remember, and he knew she liked going. Perhaps she liked it because she went to Church, and not to Chapel.

"Uncle," he said, presently, as they went along, "what's the difference between Church and Chapel?"

"Not much that I know of *here*," replied Mr. Watts, considering within himself for an answer. They pray from the Prayer-book at

Church, and there's more gentlefolks goes there than comes to Chapel."

"There's not more difference than that!" said Allen. "I thought somehow there was, and that it was a different kind of religion."

"Not a different religion, as we have it here at Hethering," answered his uncle. "I've been as much to Church as Chapel, and I've heard pretty much the same teaching from Mr. Harvey—him as was rector afore Mr. Anderson—as I've heard since from Mr. James; but then it ain't always the same. At Mapleden, now, they've broke out into all sorts of tomfooleries in the Church, more like a the*a*tre than aught else, I'm told; them as has seen it says it's nigh upon Popery."

"And that *is* a different religion?" said Allen.

"Well, yes; I'd not set my foot inside of a Church as set up for Popish Gunpowder Plot ways; there's no knowing where they won't land you. But it all depends on where you are. Now I never knew which I liked best here, and belonged pretty much as well to one

as to the other, until my wife wanted me to fix down to Chapel."

"Mother went to Church; I suppose she liked it best," pursued Allen, who had set his mind on finding out what he could about her tastes and feelings.

"That was partways along of her having been in service at Mr. Harvey's, she got used to it," said Mr. Watts; "but she didn't mind Chapel, and went with me sometimes in the evenings."

"Then it couldn't have been the difference between Church and Chapel," Allen concluded in his own mind; but he made no further remark, for they had reached their destination by this time. Mr. Watts had his duties to attend to, and the boy had nothing for it but to sit in his accustomed corner, and watch the congregation assembling. First the few who always came early, and could take out their books, and settle their footstools, and make themselves generally at home before the rest came in; then the steady stream of the mass of the congregation, and the late-comers who always arrived in a hurry after the Service

had begun; then singing, reading, praying, preaching, each in its regular order; and Allen stood, and sat, and knelt through it all, with about the same interest in the proceedings that a deaf person might feel at a concert. He felt outside it, and as if he had no concern in the business which had brought the people together; it was only as a matter of custom and necessity he was there at all, and he did not find any good came of it.

His thoughts were, however, more serious than usual; some of the texts quoted, some of the remarks in the sermon, touched on the very subject that had been occupying his mind, and the question of the preceding day came back to him so powerfully that he broke through his natural reserve, and abruptly opened the subject on his way home after Service, regardless of the unsympathetic presence of his aunt.

"Uncle, I suppose it's only good people that go to Heaven when they die?"

"Yes."

"Then do people know whether they're—whether they're good or not?"

"Why, yes, I suppose they do," replied

Mr. Watts; and a silence ensued, broken before Allen could think of what to say next, by Mrs. Watts, who remarked—

"Not every one, I'm sure: there never was such a one as you, for instance, for saying after you've done a thing as you meant no harm, showing you didn't know no more the difference between good and evil than that sparrow!" and Mrs. Watts looked so sharply at the little bird which she had selected as the type of his ignorance, that Allen was quite glad to see it fly away. To resume the subject was impossible, and he walked the rest of the way home in silence, nursing a private determination to have it out with the Westfalls in the afternoon. Even Bessie, though so much younger, seemed to know more about it than he did.

Once more, however, after the excellent Sunday dinner which, to do her justice, Mrs. Watts never failed to provide, he was tempted into questioning his uncle when they had settled down to books in the parlour, and Mrs. Watts had disappeared into the kitchen, so that the moment seemed propitious.

"Uncle, it says somewhere—I mean I've read—it's faith makes the difference; and faith's just believing—and now *I* believe it's all true what's said in the Bible; and yet I don't know—I'm quite sure, indeed, I'm not like"—what mother was, he was going to say—but Mrs. Watts reappeared just then, and having heard most of his remark, interposed with—

"It's more than talk *I* like—'Show me thy faith by thy works.'"

"And it's an apostle who said that, if I remember right," said Mr. Watts, who was slow of speech, and considerably embarrassed by the theological difficulties which his nephew seemed bent on submitting to him. "'Show me thy faith by thy works.' That's true, very true."

And the subject being thus happily disposed of, Mr. Watts went off into his afternoon doze, until the time for going again to Chapel, while Allen remained in the strip of garden attached to the house until half-past three, when he set out to join the Westfalls for the walk to the cemetery.

This Sunday afternoon walk was quite an institution at Hethering, since the old churchyard had been closed up, and many families had laid dear ones belonging to them in the quiet hill-side burying-place, about half-a-mile out of the town. And Mr. and Mrs. Westfall never took their own children to scatter flowers over the tiny grave in which Bessie's little sister had been laid, without inviting the orphan-boy—whose mother had been their friend—to accompany them.

Bessie was on the watch for him on this occasion, and sprang to meet him as he approached the gate, opening the basket she carried in her hand to show him the white lilies destined for his mother's grave.

"And oh! Allen," she began, as they started on their walk, "Sunday school was all about Hethering Hall this afternoon; Teacher had seen it, too; and I told her about our sitting in the tree and looking at it, and that you said I should have a white pony, and about Charlie's getting shut up."

Bessie's description was certainly suggestive of a very lively and conversational

class, and Allen replied wonderingly, that he had thought before teachers only taught out of the Bible; but their teachers seemed to talk about all sorts of amusing things besides.

Thereupon Bessie felt called upon to explain in detail the various steps by which she had been led to the disclosures before mentioned concerning the white pony, and Allen's aspirations, and Charlie's imprisonment; a narration in which Charlie took as lively an interest as Allen, not having had a word with his sister since they had both been dismissed from school.

"You see," pursued Bessie, "our verses that we had to repeat were the same you heard me last night, Allen; and Teacher always explains them in the afternoon. And you know there's that piece about 'many mansions'; and Teacher asked whether we knew what a mansion was. And Polly Lister looked at me, and laughed, and said, 'Teacher, Bessie knows'—because I had told her before school began about yesterday."

"Mr. Wilfred Anderson asked our class just the same," put in Charlie; "and I said, 'a big house.'"

"Well, then," continued Bessie, "Teacher asked me *what* I knew? And I said I thought it meant a beautiful large house, with gardens and things, because that was what it said on the board outside Hethering Hall, and that was called a mansion. And then Miss Anderson said she had been looking at the board too yesterday—that very same board—and that it had made her think of the verses that some little girls she knew of—that was us—were going to repeat to her the next day. And she asked me if I had ever been in near enough to see the house? So I told her about our all going there yesterday, and being let in, and our sitting in the tree; and that was the very time she must have passed along the lane, for she saw the gentleman drive in with the little boy and girl—he's a friend of hers, that is thinking of taking the place."

"Well, and did you ask her what we were talking about yesterday?" said Allen; "whe-

ther the *houses* are biggest in Heaven, and not the mansions?"

"I'm coming to that in a minute, but there's more first. Miss Anderson seemed as if she had just found out all we were thinking; for she said, perhaps some boys and girls standing in the lane might read the board, and be thinking, 'Oh, what a happy thing it must be to live in such a beautiful place!' And she seemed to remember all it said on the board about the mansion, and the rooms, and the gardens; and she asked me if we had thought that? and it was then I told her we had, and that we had sat up in the tree talking of it, and I had thought I should like to be a young lady, but you had said you would rather be a grown-up gentleman; and it was then I told her about the pony."

"You needn't have told her what I said," observed Allen, colouring.

"Oh, *she* didn't mind," replied Bessie, to whom it did not occur at the moment it was rather a question of Allen's minding. "She said she had felt just the same when she was

a little girl, and her home was in a great town, and she went out sometimes to see some cousins, who lived in a pretty place in the country called Beecham. It was like Hethering Hall, and they had gardens of their own, and a swing, and an arbour with roses growing over it, and two ponies—one a Shetland, not much bigger than a Newfoundland dog; and it put its head in at the arbour door, and eat bread out of their hands."

"What a jolly place!" interposed Charlie. "I know I'd like to have been there."

"And one time she had been staying on a visit there, she felt quite cross when she got home," continued Bessie, "and she went up to her room, and cried, and wished she might have things like her cousins, and felt very discontented because she hadn't."

"Does your teacher tell you stories like this always?" asked Allen. "It must be very nice. I'd like to go to Sunday-school too, I know—at least, if the boys' school is like the girls'."

"Our teachers are very jolly too," said

Charlie. "I like Mr. Wilfred Anderson the best, though; he's taking our class just now, whilst our teacher is away."

"And did he tell *you* about Hethering Hall?" asked Bessie.

"Yes; he told us it belonged to a boy only ten years old," replied her brother; "he won't be able to live there until he's twenty-one, but it's his all the same. He's at a big school now with lots of other boys, but everything will be kept for him, and he'll be much richer by and by than if he had it now, Mr. Wilfred Anderson said."

"Fancy, only ten years old, and all that belonging to him," murmured Allen. "Though, after all, it's not much good to him, except that he thinks about it, and knows it's his."

"Oh, and then he's got plenty of pocket-money, and sometimes great hampers of fruit sent to him. He's got all he wants for a boy," explained Charlie, who had questioned his teacher closely on this point.

"And so *your* teacher cried because she didn't live in a place like Hethering Hall?

Well, at least, we didn't do that," observed Allen.

"Yes, but then she wasn't grown-up like she is now; and they hadn't even the least bit of a garden," replied Bessie, whose affection for her teacher made her anxious that every extenuating circumstance should be grasped by her hearers. "And she didn't cry much, only just a little; because the door opened, and her sister, who was three whole years older than she was, came in."

"Did she tell of her?" inquired Charlie, eagerly. He was always keen to hear about other children's scrapes.

"No, I think she didn't," answered Bessie, "but she saw Teacher wasn't happy, and asked her why? And then she told her, for they loved each other very much, and slept in two little white beds with curtains over them like tents, side by side."

"Well, Bessie, and what did the sister say?" asked Allen.

"I don't think I can remember to tell you just like the rest of it," said Bessie, pausing to think; "it was something like this: she

said *she*—the sister, you know—had got a place even more beautiful than Beecham, and things there that would be better even than the swing and the ponies, and that whenever she wanted things like that, she thought about this beautiful place, and then that made her happy. And then Teacher guessed by her voice she meant Heaven, and got quite frightened like, and asked if she were ill, because she thought only people who were going to die, like the good children in books, talked of Heaven like that; but *she* didn't think Heaven would be at all as nice as Beecham, and it didn't make *her* at all happy to think of it."

"Just fancy her *saying* all that!" exclaimed Charlie, "now I've *thought* it ever so many times, there wouldn't be any fun, and I'd rather not go there except just to get away from hell, only I thought it would be wicked to say so."

"*Was* her sister ill?" said Allen.

"Not a bit," replied Bessie; "she laughed at the question, and said she was as well as possible. And then she told her to think of all the pleasantest days she had ever had

in her life; and then Teacher asked us which were *our* happiest days, and I said the school-treat, and Polly Lister said, 'going to her aunt in the country, and riding a donkey about the farm;' Teacher thought going to Beecham quite *her* pleasantest, and told her sister so. And then her sister—she's Mrs. Merrivale now, and I've seen her—told her if she could fancy all the pleasures of the pleasantest days put together and then never coming to an end, like things do in an evening when you've enjoyed them all the day, but going on always, only far happier than we can understand now, and we couldn't fancy how happy Heaven would be."

They had reached a pretty copse by this time, and a rush up the bank and a rapid gathering of wild flowers made a break in the conversation. Allen, however, resumed it when they had got into the open field-path once more.

"Bessie, how did Mrs. Merrivale know she had a place in Heaven?"

"Teacher asked her sister that very question," replied Bessie, "and her sister opened

the Bible, and showed her those same verses we repeated about the many mansions, and where it says, 'I go to prepare a place *for you*,' and showed her from another place it was true for all that really belonged to Jesus."

"I suppose then Mrs. Merrivale's like our Mr. Wilfred," remarked Charlie; "he spoke up quite certain like about its being all right and square for him."

"But what *I* want to know," said Allen, "is, how Mrs. Merrivale *knew* she belonged to Jesus; you haven't told me that yet, Bessie."

"It was like this," answered Bessie, trying conscientiously to remember every word of what her teacher had said. "Mrs. Merrivale told her that Jesus had promised never to turn away any one that wanted to be saved by Him, He had said, 'Him that *cometh* to Me I will in no wise cast out,' and as she *had* come to Him with her whole heart, it was right to believe that she *did* belong to Him."

"Miss Anderson wasn't good then; that's a comfort," said Charlie. "I always like to know of grown-up people having been naughty when they were young."

"I'm sure Teacher wasn't naughty," said Bessie; "she wasn't the same as Mrs. Merrivale, but she *was* afterwards. Her sister's talk made her think a deal more about Heaven and about what made the difference: she had never then really asked Jesus to be her Saviour, and take her for His child—not more than saying her prayers regular; while Mrs. Merrivale had, and always seemed to know she belonged to Jesus as much as, in another way, she belonged to her papa."

"But she said her prayers," interposed Allen, "like we all do; and, I suppose, asked that God would forgive her sins."

"Yes, she had said her prayers before, but not, somehow, like Mrs. Merrivale: just because she had to, I suppose; but she didn't expect any good to come of it, unless, perhaps, being forgiven for anything particularly naughty she had just done."

"And what more would she have?"

"Oh, a great deal more than that; because, you see, she never knew whether she was a child of God or not. Some days, when she behaved well, she thought perhaps she was;

and some days she was cross, and then she thought she wasn't. But, oh, Allen, I *am* so tired of remembering every word like you want me to, and I can't tell this part as well as the story."

Bessie's patience was well nigh exhausted. She had a capital memory, and had narrated, almost in her teacher's words, a great deal of what had been said at the Sunday-school; but Allen was bent upon just that last part which she was inclined to abandon through being really tired of the subject. He tried coaxing.

"I'm sure you've told it all beautifully, Bessie, but do just finish about Miss Anderson; did she get like Mrs. Merrivale, and how?"

"Yes, she did," replied Bessie, encouraged by this little piece of flattery; "and that was the last verse we had."

"The last verse you had!"

"Well, you know," explained the little girl, "the last bit of what we repeated was about Thomas, who said, 'How can we know the way?' and Miss Anderson said that was like *her* when she wanted to be a child of

God. Then her sister told her, if we want to go to a place we take the road that leads there; and if we wanted to be the children of God, Jesus was the Way, because He had taken the punishment instead of us, and so could give us forgiveness at once when we really wanted to belong to Him. And she did like that herself."

"But, then, how did she come to Jesus?" inquired Allen.

"Why, Allen, how you *do* keep on asking," said Bessie, once again losing patience; "I told you—at least, I thought I did—that Miss Anderson says it's just the same as if we saw Jesus when we pray to Him and *really believe He hears us;* and if we ask Him with all our hearts—*meaning it*—to have our sins taken off us, and be amongst His children, He does it: and that is just like taking the road to Hethering Hall when you want to go there."

"It seems simple enough like that," Allen thought to himself, while he stopped to gather some flowers as a reward for his little companion's good nature, "if one could only get it right for one's self."

"But for the grave-stones the burying-place had all the appearance of a beautiful garden."

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Instinctively the children hushed their voices and quieted their paces as they reached the cemetery, and threaded their way among the grassy mounds and white gravestones until they stood where Bessie's little sister had been laid a year before. Even the most unobservant must have been struck by the contrast between death and life that was everywhere apparent. A lilac in full blossom was hanging over the little one's grave; a young chesnut-tree in fresh spring foliage was just beyond; the beds of flowers were gay with colours, and the birds were singing in the old elms overhead. But for the gravestones, on which the afternoon sun was shining down, making their new whiteness conspicuous, the burying-place had all the appearance of a beautiful garden.

"Sissy down there," said little Arthur, who had tight hold of Mr. Westfall's hand, pointing to the grave. "Won't she never come up again?"

"Yes, little Arthur," replied his father, softly, "she'll come again some day;" and while the child took up and repeated his

words he turned to his wife, and to Allen who was at her side, and said, "I've sometimes felt it hard to believe it about all those we lay in the grave, that it's only like seeds that are sown; but on a spring day like this I think it would be hardest *not* to believe."

"Has Sissy gone to Heaven?" asked Harry, next older than Arthur.

"Oh yes, Harry; all little babies do," replied Mrs. Westfall; "and so, too, has your dear mother, Allen," she added, turning reverently to the grassy mound adjoining, on which Bessie's white lilies were being scattered; "if there was ever a blessed saint, it was your mother."

There was a choking in Allen's throat when he tried to answer, and he turned aside that the two big tears which had found their way into his eyes might not be perceived. When he had recovered his voice, it was to Bessie that he spoke.

"Oh, Bessie, I'd give all I have in the whole world to know for sure and certain that there's a place for me in the 'house of many mansions.'"

And I think Bessie's answer was not far wrong when she said—" I'm sure, Allen, Teacher would say, if you *really* want it you're certain to get it, like she did. You can try the same way."

Bessie's further determination, on the first possible opportunity, to open the matter fully to her teacher, was expressed in so low a voice that Allen did not hear it, or it is exceedingly possible that his shyness would have prevailed over his anxiety, and he would have insisted on the child's keeping what he had said to herself.

CHAPTER V.

MR. WILFRED ANDERSON.

"THERE was a message sent down while you were out, that something wants doing up at the Rectory," said Mrs. Watts to her husband, about ten days later, when he came in with Allen for his dinner.

"A heavy job?" inquired Mr. Watts briefly, applying himself to the business of his knife and fork as one determined to make the most of his time.

"Not particular, I should say," replied his wife; "it's about some book-shelves: only they want seeing after this afternoon, because the young gentleman's at home, and wished to give his own orders."

"That's the one from Oxford, I suppose," observed Mr. Watts. "I've seen him about with the young ladies two or three times."

"Mr. Wilfred Anderson!" exclaimed Allen, eagerly.

"Why, what should *you* know about him?" asked Mrs. Watts, turning quickly on the boy.

"Charlie Westfall told me about him last week. He had been teaching him at the Sunday school."

"Well, if he's the Westfalls' teacher, he's not yours," returned Mrs. Watts. "As I says when the District called, and made mention of Mr. Anderson's having asked her to, we're Chapel folks, and don't make no pretences like some other people I could tell her of; and didn't want the traxes, and wished her good-morning: and she returned 'good-morning' quite civil, and called again next week; and I says the same thing, and she didn't come again."

"No wonder," thought Allen, to whom it was a mystery past explaining, that she should have ever come near the place the second time.

"He's given me two or three very handsome jobs, and paid for them ready money,

too," remarked Mr. Watts; "which is what every one don't do in these times. There's not a one in Hethering has got a word to say against him. He's a downright good gentleman."

"Oh! I've not got anything to say against him," said the wife; "only business is business, and he needn't come talking here. I've been in the back yard and not heard him knock each time he's been down the street. He left word with Mrs. Tincome next door he'd called, and I told her we'd a bit laid by in the savings' bank, and there's your benefit club, and I've put in for my funeral ever since I was a child, so that it's a mere nothing to pay now; and we needn't be beholden to any one if even times were harder than they are." She might have added that these very conclusive reasons for avoiding the acquaintance of the Rector had been fully reported to him by the obliging neighbour beforementioned, but with this fact she was unacquainted.

"They've been nigh upon two years at the Rectory now," observed Mr. Watts. "It

scarcely seems so long till one comes to think of it."

"Just two years," answered Mrs. Watts; "I remember I was close on my spring cleaning when the District called."

"Uncle, it must be nice at Sunday school," observed Allen, in whose mind the mention of Mr. Wilfred Anderson had recalled the talk with the Westfalls the Sunday week previously. "I wish I went there too; Charlie says there are plenty of boys as big as me goes. You know I used to once when I was quite little, only then I belonged to the infant class."

A soft expression came over Mr. Watts's face when the boy mentioned the days gone by. "I've meant to do the best I could for you, Allen," he said kindly, "but I've known a deal of harm come to young chaps like you along of mixing with others—more harm than they've ever got good at school. I paid a shilling a week all along for you to Mr. Townsend, rather than send you to the national school. I've wanted you to grow up God-fearing and steady."

"That's my way of thinking, too," remarked Mrs. Watts in a decided voice: "it's the same with all boys—out of sight one moment and in mischief the next—which I rather think you'd best not ask your uncle again on that matter."

Allen made up his mind, at all events, not to mention it in her presence again, and shortly afterwards his uncle bade him collect the tools and follow him up to the Rectory, as book-shelves might have to be done on the spot, and it was best to be ready if they wished them done at once.

They were not long in reaching the Rectory door, and the page-boy Robert conducted them immediately to Mr. Wilfred Anderson's room — half bedroom, half study — a very pleasant sort of place in the western wing of the building, which ran out into various shapes and developments, according with the architectural tastes of past generations of rectors. Allen wondered how much of the day the boy Robert must spend in losing himself and how much in finding himself again, they went through so many passages, and up

and down so many small flights of stairs on their way. Mr. Wilfred Anderson was sitting at his writing-table by the window when they were ushered in. He looked very busy with his books and papers, while the double row of well-bound volumes ranged on the floor for want of better accommodation, sufficiently indicated why he was in a hurry for his shelves.

The exact business was soon explained. Mr. Anderson thought that a book-case leaning up against the wall, which had come from his college rooms, might, with a little alteration, be accommodated to a recess in the wall, now occupied by partitions which must be removed. Could Mr. Watts undertake it? and how soon could the work be accomplished?

The matter being thus stated, Mr. Watts went through some very elaborate calculations and measurements; counted up various items on his fingers; and finally announced that, if Allen might stay, and at once remove the fixtures, he would carry off the book-case to the workshop, and was safe to promise the job for the next evening.

Mr. Wilfred Anderson seemed quite satis-

fied with this arrangement; and, when Mr. Watts had gone, he caused a great dusting-sheet to be spread over the floor for Allen's accommodation, ascertained that he clearly understood what he had to do, and then subsided into his work at the writing-table, while the boy entered on the straightforward task of unscrewing the partitions.

And the western sunshine streamed in at the open windows, which were fringed with creepers; and the soft breeze made rustlings amongst the papers, and came in pleasant little gusts to cool Allen at his work. And as the time went on, it would have been hard to decide which of the two workers was most busily occupied, the lad with his tools, or the young man—who had a wonderful power of concentrated thought and superiority to interruption—with his pen.

Mr. Anderson had passed through a brilliant college career, and was shortly about to be ordained on his Fellowship, when he meant to settle down at once to help his father as Curate. It was in preparation for his Ordination that he was busy now; and there was

much grave earnestness in his face as his hand moved rapidly, and he filled sheet after sheet with close lines of writing. Allen wondered what it was all about, as he glanced at him over his shoulder now and then. Something very learned and clever, no doubt, for what must there be in a person's head before they can keep on like that, and apparently without ever being at a loss how to spell a word! Indeed, as the quiet part of the carpentry came to an end, and, if the work were to be done at all, hammering must begin, he grew quite uncomfortable at the disturbance he would make; and, after waiting irresolutely for a moment, decided it would, at all events, be better to give notice of the coming interruption.

"Please, sir," he began, hesitatingly, "I've got to the hammering now."

"Well?"

"And I thought maybe I'd be disturbing you."

"Never mind, my boy; hammer away," said Mr. Anderson. "You'll get done all the faster."

And thereupon Allen set to work with such vigour, and produced such a series of resounding blows, that he heard nothing else, and had been hammering on for some time before he became aware that a silent spectator, in the person of little Mary, the youngest of the Rectory children, was standing behind him, watching his proceedings with acute interest.

"Ah! Mary," he heard the brother saying, playfully, during a momentary pause; "I see what has given me the honour of a visit. You heard there was something going on, and you wanted to know all about it."

And the next time Allen looked round, Mr. Anderson had risen from his desk, and had taken his little sister up in his arms, and was explaining to her the use of the various tools.

"And what's that, Brother Wi'fred?"

"The great big hammer for driving in nails, and that would hurt little Mary very much to play with—as I know she is wishing to do at this very minute."

"And that?"

"The saw, which goes 'cut-cut, cut-cut,' until it cuts through the pieces of wood as cleverly as the knife cuts up Mary's bread and butter."

"And that big boy, what's his name?" pursued the little damsel, whose notions of catechetical instruction were founded upon the principle—not generally admitted—that children should ask the questions, and grown-up people answer them.

The big boy in question gave one merry look round, and then, colouring to the roots of his hair, hammered away with renewed energy; whilst Mr. Anderson replied, laughingly—

"I don't know his name. Supposing you ask himself?"

"What's your name, big boy?" promptly demanded the little questioner, pulling his sleeve from behind to make him attend. The reply, which came in a low voice, was repeated in her silver treble:—"'Allen,' he says his name is; 'Allen Galbraith.'"

"And a little girl whose name is Mary Anderson," said her brother, kindly, as he

put her down, "has by this time asked all the questions she is going to have answered, and shall run away for the present, and ask nurse to let her see the shelves being put up to-morrow."

"Allen Galbraith!" repeated Mr. Anderson soon after, when the boy had finished his task, and was preparing to leave; "I seem to know your name, my boy, though I scarcely know how. Do you belong to the school—the Sunday school, I mean?"

"No, sir," replied Allen; "we're Chapel folks, so I don't go to your school—leastways, not since I was very little, and was in the infant class."

"At which time," said Mr. Anderson, "I must have been a schoolboy at Rugby, and could have known nothing about you; and yet it was certainly in some connection with the schools that your name sounded familiar."

"I've wanted to go of late," remarked Allen, shyly, not with any intention of throwing a light upon the subject, but simply because Mr. Anderson's kind manner invited his confidence; "but, when I asked uncle, he

didn't seem to want it. Charlie and Bessie Westfall, they go, and had told me about it."

"Ah! I remember all about it now," exclaimed Mr. Anderson, to whom the mention of the Westfalls had supplied the missing link in his recollection. "Then you're the Allen" (the words came slowly and earnestly now), "who wants to know for sure and certain that there's a place preparing for *you* in the Father's House of many mansions? Is it so, my boy?"

Had Allen been called upon, as a matter of evidence, to testify concerning himself that he was awake and in his right senses, I question whether, at that moment, he would have been prepared to make the assertion, so utterly was he taken by surprise. Nor was his reply, except by inference, an answer to the question; as all he could think of saying was to the effect, "that he wondered how ever Mr. Anderson had heard about him."

Mr. Anderson, however, chose to consider this as an admission that he *was* the Allen, and proceeded to ask whether, his work being done, he could stay and have a little talk?

Now, as Mr. Watts had told his nephew that it would not be worth his while to begin any other work that afternoon, and there was a good half-hour to spare before tea, Allen had no hesitation in saying he might stop; and soon he found himself seated at the writing-table near his new friend, talking to him almost as freely as if he had been in his class for years.

For it so happened that the very first question Charlie's teacher asked opened the flood-gates of the orphan boy's heart, and led to the recital of all that the reader already knows concerning his mother, and the Bible with her name and writing in it, and her prayer that her boy would meet her in Heaven; and then to the confession that, though he wanted to go there, and seemed to have been told as much as other people thought enough, he was always thinking of late that he was somehow not in the right way. He supposed it was because he wasn't good enough, and he wanted to get better, only Mrs. Watts was that aggravating, she seemed to come between him and good things. He thought there was

a fairer chance for everybody else that didn't live with her.

"Why do you think people that are not good can't go to Heaven?" asked Mr. Anderson at last.

"Doesn't it say so in the Bible, sir?" replied Allen, fumbling in his mind to bring out a text, but unsuccessfully.

"Well—yes, it does say so," said Mr. Anderson, "and in a great many places. Here is one, Rom. iii. 23: 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.' And there is another passage in Rev. xxi. 27, which, speaking of the Heavenly Jerusalem, says: 'And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.' And you shall find me yet one more," continued Mr. Anderson, handing Allen a Bible, "in John v., the 28th and 29th verses: 'Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and

they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.' You see, we have found enough already—and there are a great many more passages—to show that you are quite right in your notion that the wicked cannot get into Heaven."

Allen sighed. "Yes, I knew those verses when you read them, sir. I've heard them scores of times, though I could not call them to mind just at the moment."

"Well, then, Allen, as you want to go to Heaven, have you tried to be good?"

"Yes, sir," replied the boy, timidly, "ever so often." There was a moment's hesitation, and a scarlet flush spread over his face as, apparently making up his mind to speak without reserve, he proceeded: "There was one day in particular, a long time ago, that Charlie, and Bessie, and me had been talking about it; and we settled we'd try and spend one day without doing the least little thing that was wrong. Bessie had repeated, 'It is a sin to steal a pin;' and we thought we'd try not even to do anything so bad as that. We got on pretty well for about an hour or so;

and then, quite by accident, when we were playing, Charlie broke the arm of Bessie's doll. It was almost new, and her favourite doll; and so Bessie began to cry, and said Charlie was very careless—which I think he was; and he got angry then, and said what a nice temper Bessie was in, and that was the way some people kept to being good. And then I said something cross to him; and so we ended in having a regular quarrel, and it wasn't even so good a day as usual."

"Supposing you had been successful that day," said Mr. Anderson, "and you had not done anything wrong; should you have lain down at night feeling that at last you could be sure of getting to Heaven?"

"No, sir; that's what we said afterwards. Supposing we *had* kept on for ever so long, and then did something sinful, we'd be as badly off as ever; and Charlie, he said he thought quite the best way was to wait for the last moment before we died, and then say, 'Lord, have mercy upon me,' because there wouldn't be time to do anything wrong after that."

"And did you think the same as Charlie?"

"Not quite, sir, because I can remember mother, and how happy she was; and it's that which set me on thinking maybe it was Church made the difference, only I asked uncle, and he said mother went to Chapel with him 'times, and used to like what she heard there as much as what she heard at Church."

"What would become of Charlie's plan supposing a person were to die suddenly?" suggested Mr. Anderson. "I was out on the river at Oxford the other day; a boat passed by me, and I was shocked to see that it contained the dead body of a young man whom I had known quite well, and had spoken to a couple of hours before. He had been rowing under some trees that hung over the water, and, when moving at a rapid pace, had struck his head against a branch. Apparently the blow stunned him, for he fell sideways, and upset the boat, and sank instantly. The people who saw the accident did their utmost, but when they recovered the body all life was

gone. I believe the poor young fellow was prepared; but what if he had trusted to Charlie's plan?"

"It would have been of no use to him," replied Allen, seriously. "I've always thought myself it would be a risk like to leave it that way to the last moment. Do you think, perhaps, sir, people who are *rather* good, and try to do the best they can, get right at last?"

It was a suggestion made more because the boy could see no other way out of the difficulty, than because he felt such a solution satisfactory.

Mr. Anderson replied by opening the Bible at James ii. 10, and reading slowly:—"Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Then, turning to Gal. iii. 10, read also:—"Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all things* which are written in the book of the law to do them." "You see, Allen, if we are to get to Heaven by being good, ours must be a perfect goodness. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself summed up the law in these precepts: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God

with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself.' If we fall short of this standard; if we have, at any time in our whole lives, fallen short of this standard; if we have not *always* loved God with our whole heart and mind; if we have not *always* cared for all other persons as much as for ourselves, we cannot by any possibility get fit for Heaven by being good, however much we may try."

"Then it's of no use trying to be good," sighed Allen. "Well, it's always seemed to me I've fallen back just as much when I've tried as when I haven't, and it's best to know it at once."

"And, you see," remarked Mr. Anderson, "even if you were to succeed in being good from this day, you couldn't undo the past; there are all the wrong things you ever did behind the good part of your life."

Allen felt this did not place things in a more cheerful light; but, thinking Mr. Anderson had finished what he meant to say, with some disappointment in his heart that

nothing more had come of the conversation, was preparing to pick up his tools and go. His new friend, however, stopped him.

"Stay, my boy," he said, kindly; "I have better news for you than you seem to think. Though I have made you see you can never get to Heaven by your own efforts to be good, *there is another way* by which, I trust, before very long, you *will* have found what you want. You have heard of Jesus, Allen? I am not speaking to one who is ignorant of the Bible. I can see you know His history—how He left His Father's courts on high, and came down to earth as an infant child; how He lived a life of privation and want, of temptation and trial, without once yielding to sin; and, after this life of perfect holiness, died a shameful death which He did not deserve. You have often, I daresay, heard why He died?"

"To save sinners," was Allen's prompt reply.

"But why should Christ *die* to save sinners? When there is a house on fire, and some one inside is in danger of perishing, a

brave man will hasten to save that person if he can; but he saves by his exertions. So, too, if there is any one drowning, the bystanders will do all they can to save him; their *active efforts* are the means of rescuing him. When sinners are in danger of perishing in hell, why should Christ *die* to save them?"

Allen thought a moment, but could not find an answer; so Mr. Anderson resumed—

"I will show you the answer in Heb. ix. 22: 'Without shedding of blood is no remission.' You see, Allen, God's Word had said that death should be the punishment of sin."

"Why couldn't God forgive without that?" asked Allen, hastily; "free and open-handed like?"

"God is *just*, as well as *good*, Allen. Now, you know that, even in earthly matters, we think a great deal of justice. Our magistrate, Mr. Gibson, would not be respected as he is if, when a prisoner was brought before him, he were to say, 'Well, it is quite true the man *did* break into a house, and steal a

good deal of property; but then, poor fellow, he really was badly off, and he didn't like work; so we must not be hard upon him. Let the prisoner be set free;' and so on through all the cases brought before him, treating innocent and guilty alike. Thieves and rogues would call him soft and good-natured; but honest men would say he was not fit for his office—he was not *just*—crime would spread if this went on—Mr. Gibson must change his ways, or give up his post. Now, Allen, we are told in the Bible that God is a *just* God; He cannot pass over sin —and we know so little, we cannot tell what the consequences might not have been, if sin *had* been passed over without punishment; but yet He loved the sinner, and, when no other way could be found by which sinful man might be forgiven,

"'Jesus said,
He'd bear the punishment *instead*.'

That is why Jesus died, Allen, that He might take our punishment *instead* of us. You can see in Heb. ix. 28 it says, 'Christ was once

offered to bear the sins of many;' 1 Peter iii. 18, 'Christ also hath once suffered, the just *for* the unjust, that He might bring us to God;' 2 John ii. 2, 'He is the Propitiation (or sacrifice), not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world.'"

"Wouldn't it seem, sir, as if all the world would get safe, then?" interposed Allen, who felt as if his only chance was to speak his difficulties as fast as they occurred to him.

"The death of Jesus—God as well as man—*was* of such infinite value, that it was sufficient to atone for the sins of the whole world," replied Mr. Anderson; "and because Jesus has borne this punishment, He can offer to all a *free pardon.* But many will not come to Him for it. Those who do are safe. Not that God passes over sin, but that its punishment is *laid on Jesus*, and counts to all those who come to Him, and belong to Him. 'There is *now* no condemnation to them that are *in* Christ Jesus.'"

"But then, sir, how can any one know that they do belong to Jesus?" asked Allen, thoughtfully.

"They must find out what Jesus himself says about that: 'God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that *whosoever* believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life' (John iii. 16). 'He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but *is* passed from death unto life' (John v. 24). 'I am the Bread of Life; he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; he that believeth on Me shall never thirst. . . . This is the bread that cometh down from Heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die.' All these verses, Allen, speak of a new life, which Christ has it in His power to give *to all who seek it*, and to give *now*. The only condition is, our receiving the gift He offers. He undertakes to save us *now* from sin, and hereafter from the punishment of sin; and such as *do* believe in Him find He is true to His word. He gives them a new life according to His promise—a new life to be spent for a little while *here;* for ever in the 'Father's House of many mansions.' 'As many as *received Him*, to

them gave He power to become sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.'"

Allen was silent for a few moments after Mr. Anderson had finished speaking; then he quietly picked up his tools.

"I'd best go home now, sir," he said, "and thank you more than I know how to for what you've said. It's coming clearer to me, I think, though it's not all straight yet."

Mr. Anderson stopped him. "Look here, my boy," he said. "Read this promise: 'Ask, and it *shall* be given you; seek, and ye *shall* find; knock, and it *shall* be opened unto you.'[1] And this passage: 'Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.'[2] Don't go away for a moment; let us kneel together, and plead them for *you*."

Allen had never heard such a prayer since the dimly remembered days of childhood. He loved to tell afterwards how it seemed to show him what prayer might be; how Mr. Anderson spoke to the Lord Jesus as to a Friend with whom he was accustomed to hold constant intercourse, Whom he felt to be pre-

(1) Luke xi. 9. (2) Hos. vi. 3.

sent, Whose answer to his prayer was a matter of assurance; and how, when they rose from their knees, and after a kind shake of the hand from Mr. Anderson, and the promise that he should see him again, he passed out at the Rectory-door, he felt he had been in the presence-chamber of the King of kings; and he realized, as he had never done before, that Christ was not merely an historical personage, but a living, present, actual Saviour, Whose good-will seemed now in a manner engaged on his behalf since that earnest pleading of promises which he was convinced would never be broken.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MEETING DOWN AT MRS. COLEMAN'S.

ALLEN was very quiet the rest of that evening; quiet that is to say in the matter of talking. His thoughts were busy enough, and so too were his hands; for his aunt, considerately calling to mind Dr. Watts's well-known couplet to the effect that—

> "Satan finds some mischief still,
> For idle hands to do,"

had provided against such a possibility in Allen's case by effecting a purchase which she triumphantly pointed out at tea as "a good lot of wood for firing—bought cheap in the rough,"—adding, "that she knew she'd save the money twice over in having what would keep Allen out of mischief: which he had better set to work at without delay, and get a good handful ready for faggots by bed-time."

Owing to the frequent and embittering quotation of those lines before mentioned, Allen had occasionally been tempted into something like a feeling of personal resentment to the worthy Doctor who wrote them; but, on the present occasion, he was too much engrossed with the recollection of what had passed in Mr. Anderson's study to care much how his hands were employed; and, indeed, once started in the wood-chopping, quite forgot to leave off, until even Mrs. Watts called to him that he had done enough, and, melted into good nature by the extensive provision of faggots he had accomplished, gave him a slice of bread and cheese for supper, and hinted that he had earned an evening's respite on the following day.

That following day Allen had hoped to be employed—at all events, in part—at the Rectory. But this was not to be. Mr. Watts wanted no assistance in putting up the shelves, and sent his nephew to help the other workmen in some shop-fittings which had to be attended to further down the street. These proved a tedious business, and took so long a

time that the boy was quite late for tea when he returned from work in the afternoon. He was just considering whether it would be safe to ask after Mr. Wilfred Anderson, when, to his utter surprise, his uncle opened the subject with—

"When I was up at the Rectory just now, young Mr. Anderson spoke to me of a week-night Bible-reading he's got every Thursday down at Mrs. Coleman's. He asked if I'd go there, and seemed to think it wouldn't be against it when I told him we wasn't Church people. He answered quite pleasant, that for the matter of that, he's not a clergyman yet; and there's Mr. Coleman, and Mrs. Stenning, both Chapel folks, that come regular."

"I shall let Mrs. Stenning know a piece of my mind," threw in Mrs. Watts, who was perfectly aware that her friend was named in order to disarm objections.

"And are you going, uncle?" asked the boy, eagerly, and wondering whether only grown-up people were admitted.

"Well, yes, I think for once, I've sort of promised to this evening He had a kind of

light in his face—a pleasant way with him, so that I couldn't well be against going, as he wished it. He asked after *you*, too—I suppose along of seeing you yesterday—so you'd best clean yourself up a bit, and be ready to come with me. It's at eight o'clock."

It quite took Allen's breath away to hear all this announced so quietly, and he stole an anxious glance at Mrs. Watts, thinking the storm must break presently, though he prudently refrained from giving expression to his own feelings, lest he should bring it down upon himself.

But Mrs. Watts, beyond muttering to herself as to "some people who could be turned over and over like the paste in a jam pudding, by a few words from a mere youngster," made no sign, and he concluded the storm must be over, and that his uncle had, contrary to his usual custom, gained his own way and come off victor.

Down at Mrs. Coleman's things were already in a forward state of preparation when Mr. Watts and his nephew arrived; super-

fluous furniture had been taken out of the parlour, and all the chairs of the establishment had been put into it, with several which did not belong to the house, but were contributed by friendly neighbours. Altogether it seemed that Mrs. Coleman at a squeeze (and she evidently expected a squeeze), could afford accommodation to as many as five-and-twenty persons. Some had already arrived, but there were still several vacant places, in two of which Mr. Watts and Allen seated themselves, and half shyly looked round upon their companions, and the new-comers who soon filled the room to overflowing. They were, many of them, respectable enough in position and appearance, and Mr. Watts exchanged a nod here and there with friends whom he had not expected to meet under such circumstances. But there were others whose shabby dress and rough manner bespoke a lower social position, and it was not difficult to guess that they had been enticed out of the neighbouring alley, which, by a pleasantry not unusual in street nomenclature, was termed the Orchard, it being in fact the only part, in the otherwise flourishing

little town of Hethering, which was fruitful in nothing but squalor and wretchedness.

It was evidently from the Orchard that the rough-looking woman at Allen's side had come, and as he noticed her careless dress and untaught manners, he wondered how she had been led to join in such a gathering as this; especially as the year-old baby which had mercifully gone to sleep in her arms afforded an excellent pretext for her remaining at home had she been so minded. He knew how it was when, just before eight o'clock, Mr. Anderson came in, for he could hear a whisper at the door from a bright-faced elderly woman who seemed to feel *herself* responsible—

"There's a baby, sir, this evening. I thought you wouldn't mind. Mrs. Hagar couldn't come without it, and my Susanna has kept it amused for an hour, that it might go off peaceful."

Whether Mr. Anderson thoroughly apprehended the nature of the arrangement, and the precise bearing of Susanna's entertainment of the baby upon its subsequent be-

haviour, may be reasonably doubted; but he fully understood that the mother could not have come without it, and turned a kind look of welcome upon the poor woman, who, with a natural instinct, had become aware that she was spoken of—said he was glad to see her there, and expressed his conviction that the baby would be no hindrance to the proceedings of the evening.

Then, taking his place at the table in the corner, and drawing out his pocket Bible, he looked up at the little company, and said, quietly—

"There is an old promise, made long ago by One who never breaks his word. It is this: 'Where two or three are gathered together in My name, *there am I in the midst of them.*' Let us try, dear friends, to remember that these words are simply and literally *true.* The Lord Jesus, Who spoke them, *is* here amongst us now, though our natural eyes cannot see Him, just as truly as He was with his disciples when they *did* see Him. And, when we kneel down to ask His blessing upon our meeting together in His name, let us pray

as if we saw Him, in the full belief that He will hear and answer our petitions."

Certainly Mr. Anderson prayed as if he were speaking to a revered and beloved Friend then present. And when they rose from their knees, there was a hushed silence, as if he were not the only one who realized that the King of glory does indeed condescend to be in their midst, when a few humble seekers after Him have met together in His name.

Mr. Anderson proceeded to read Luke xix. 1—10. He was a capital reader, and gave full effect to the simple narrative of Zaccheus, explaining it afterwards with such clearness, that even the most ignorant—probably Mrs. Hagar—could understand it, and could picture all its various details: the rich man in his comfortable dwelling, with lucrative business, and all the appliances of wealth, yet with one wish unsatisfied—the desire to see and know Jesus. Then the seeking to draw near Him in the throng; the jostling, the discouragement, and the sudden adoption of means which must have exposed him to

much ridicule from the crowd, but which gained the desired end. Then Christ's drawing near; His voice being heard; His recognition in Zaccheus of a *seeker* for salvation; and the bidding him come down, "for, saith He, to-day I must abide at thy house." Finally, the joyful reception given to Jesus by Zaccheus, and the announcement by the Lord, "*This day is salvation come to this house.*"

Mr. Anderson sketched the narrative with vivid word-painting, and then said to his little audience, "This is what I want to speak to you about: what Zaccheus *had*, what you *may have—present salvation.*"

"A great many of you," he proceeded, "*hope* to be saved. It is one of the commonest answers which we receive who are anxious to lead sinners to Jesus—'I'm doing the best I can, and have a hard enough time of it here; I *hope* to be saved at the last.'"

Allen could not help noticing that one or two persons looked as if they had been saying something of the kind, and they thought this was a hit at them.

"Others will say," continued Mr. Anderson, "'I have a striving life, and am no scholar: it's different for such as have *book learning;* but God Almighty won't deal the same by us poor folks that haven't. I'm sure *I hope* to get saved at last.'"

Mrs. Hagar certainly felt this come home to her, for she stretched her head forward to listen, and contrived to give her baby such a sudden shake that it became hoplessly wide awake in a minute's time, and continued so to the end of the meeting, exacting much anxious attention from herself, and from Allen, and from the pleasant-faced woman before mentioned. For it may be confidently asserted that there are few tasks requiring greater ingenuity than that of keeping a lively infant quiet —which seems to have no alternative between crowing and crying—especially when you are prevented by the force of circumstances from having recourse to any of the recognized methods, such as talking, singing, chirruping, and the like. Pulling Allen's hair was its first amusement; then it cried to be taken in his arms, with a design—as it appeared after-

wards—on the girl's earrings who sat beyond him; then it cried to go back to its mother; and finally, refused to be pacified until the pleasant-faced woman bore it away in her arms, and walked up and down with it outside the house till the meeting was over.

But, in spite of all difficulties, Mrs. Hagar was drinking in the good news which Mr. Anderson was trying to make clear to them: how salvation—safety from the curse of sin, freedom from the dominion of sin—is promised to all who believe the message, and, accepting the free offer made by the Lord Jesus Christ, become His children by adoption, and heirs of everlasting glory. And Allen, too, was hearing over again much that Mr. Anderson had explained the previous day, and was beginning to understand more fully all that Christ is pledged to give to the sinner, and to grasp the great fact that salvation is the *first*, and not the *last*, part of the Christian's spiritual life.

Mr. Anderson seemed as if he thought no trouble too great if he might but bring this truth out clearly. He spoke very plainly

as to the common notions about religion :— "I must do this and do that; give up such a bad habit, and take up such a good one; and, by and by, when I have become a changed character, then I may begin to hope that I am safe for Heaven."

"People might reform their ways," Mr. Anderson said, "until they were outwardly amongst the most respectable and virtuous, and yet not be one step on the way to Heaven; for, *if they had nothing else to trust to*, he asked them as a plain matter of common sense, was it possible that a man's temperance one year should atone for his intemperance during the previous year; that a person's honesty in the summer should undo the dishonesty which had been practised in the winter? Our lives would be, *as a whole*, before God's eyes; and taking them as a whole, the fact that a few years out of the many had been less stained than the others with sin, would not enable us to stand with confidence before the judgment-seat, or expect admission into that blessed place, of which it is said, that '*nothing that defileth shall enter in.*'"

On the other hand, although a reformed life would not make a person safe for Heaven, yet Mr. Anderson very earnestly impressed upon them, that serving Satan and belonging to Christ Jesus *could not* go together. Were there any present who thought they might profess to believe in Christ and yet never do His will, who would like to escape Hell, but were determined not to give up their sins; to such he would only say, the message was *not for them.* Though a reformed life would not make a person safe for Heaven, yet it was equally sure that no person continuing in a life of sin could be safe for Heaven. For what was Christ's offer? "He shall save his people *from their sins*" (Matt. i. 21). "Sin shall not have dominion over you" (Rom. vi. 14). "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on His name." Christ's promise is not to deliver sinners only from the terrors of Hell, but to take them *now*, and turn them from lost degraded servants of Satan, into *children of God—joint-heirs with Christ.*

At this point Allen, being relieved from the baby, had nothing to distract his attention, and was listening eagerly in the hope that something would be said further as to *when* a person might feel sure that such a change had indeed taken place. And it seemed almost as if Mr. Anderson had read the desire in his bright eyes, for his next remarks dwelt upon that point.

He reverted once more to the history of Zaccheus, and our Lord's words, "This day is salvation come to this house," and then said, "The day of salvation *has* come to some of us, we have gone to Jesus with the burden of our sins, and He has taken the burden off us, and has welcomed us into the number of His children. Now we love the Lord Jesus and strive to serve Him. It may be we cannot tell the exact time when we passed from death unto life; the dawn of day is sometimes very gradual in the soul; but just as we know the difference between day and night, however gradual the twilight approaches of morning may have been, so we ought to know, and most of us *do* know, whether the Sun of

Righteousness has dawned in our hearts, has chased away the dark mists of sin and unbelief, and has given to us the Light of life.

"With others," continued Mr. Anderson, "the day of salvation may be *now.* If any here are feeling the burden of their past sins, and want to lay those sins upon Jesus, and to be taken in among the redeemed children of God; in spite of all your unworthiness, all your unfitness, if in your heart you *want* Jesus—not only to deliver you from hell, but also to make you fit for Heaven; not only to blot out the past for ever, but also to enable you to live a holy life in future—do believe it, believe it *now,* He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.

"'Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him.'

"If salvation has not already come to you, may it be said of some in this room, '*This day* is salvation come unto thee.' Believe that He is able, believe that He is willing, to

save you when, according to His Word, you come to Him for pardon and for life. Say in your heart, 'Jesus, I am a great sinner, but Thou art a greater Saviour. O Lord, save *me*.'"

Allen did not lose a word of it, and his heart responded with a feeling of new-found life and hope to the utterance which Mr. Anderson had suggested as that of a soul seeking salvation.

Mr. Anderson continued: "No other human being can know *when* this transaction takes place; *when* Jesus puts His Spirit within the heart—the life-giving, transforming Spirit. No human eye can see the name of the new-born child of God inscribed upon the fair pages of the Book of Life. But the sinner knows whether he has turned with his whole heart to seek Jesus for his Saviour; and, if he believes that God's Word is true, he must also believe that Jesus, Who said, 'Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out,' has *not* turned away, but has, according to His promise, received, forgiven, and adopted as His own for ever, that soul

that has fled to Him for refuge from the wrath to come. *The question is between yourselves and your Maker*, dear friends: any one of us can be mistaken about the other; we can be deceived by the close resemblance which religious impression bears to real conversion; which temporary excitement will sometimes assume to true conviction of sin. But *God* is not deceived; and you yourselves need not be deceived, if you ask light from above. Only rest satisfied with nothing short of an actual *surrender of yourselves to be Christ's for ever*, and you are safe.

"But if you are Christ's, the world around must see the change before long. It was seen immediately in Zaccheus: 'Behold, Lord,' was the announcement which he made publicly, 'the half of my goods I give to the poor; and, if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.' This act of consecration of half his fortune to the relief of the distresses of the poor, whilst out of the remainder he promised fourfold restitution to all whom he had wrongfully oppressed, was very unlike the dishonest,

money-grasping spirit which usually characterized the publican, and to which Zaccheus was probably no exception, since the people spoke of him individually as 'a man that was a sinner.' But it was in accordance with the new spirit which more or less comes to all who are really born of God. 'The love of Christ constraineth us,' that we 'should not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us.' The service of the Lord must spring from love to Him who has saved us from the lost condition in which we were before.

"And oh! dear friends, we Christians ought to lead a much higher kind of Christian life than is common amongst us. If we are *not* children of wrath, we *are* children of God; we ought openly to confess ourselves as such, and every day try to grow more like our great Pattern and Elder Brother the Lord Jesus; daily holding communion with Him, making much of His holy day, going up to His House to sing His praises, surrounding His table with thankful hearts; our lives ought to be one manifest recommendation of real religion.

May such a life as this betoken with some in this room that salvation has indeed come unto you!"

A closing hymn, and prayer, concluded the meeting. One by one the party passed out from Mrs. Coleman's cottage. Mrs. Hagar resumed her baby from the pleasant-faced woman outside, and Allen could hear her saying, "I'm main glad I cum; I'll be here agen cum Thursday."

"I'm glad, too; aren't you, uncle?" he said, as they turned out of the street.

"Yes, he speaks well," replied Mr. Watts, "and he'll make a fine parson; coming back here, he told me, to be curate to his father the old gentleman."

"Though there's a deal I'd like to have told me yet," continued Allen.

"There'll be a chance for you then, to-morrow, "said his uncle; "there's a book Mr. Anderson said he'd lend me, and he asked just now if you'd come up for it to-morrow evening at seven."

"Why," thought Allen to himself, "it seems as if everything came straight to help me."

And then all at once there flashed across his mind the promises which had been pleaded the day before, "Ask, and it *shall* be given you; seek, and ye *shall* find; knock, and it *shall* be opened to you;" and in gladness of heart he exclaimed aloud, when alone in his little room, "It's true! it's true!"

CHAPTER VII.

ENLISTED IN THE KING'S OWN.

THOSE other points on which Allen wanted information were cleared up wonderfully when he came to talk them over with his new friend on the following evening. First among them all was the question about the '*new life*,' concerning which Mr. Anderson had talked at Mrs. Coleman's.

"It seems as if—as if it would be kindo' presumption to talk like as if one were all right unless—unless I were—so different to what I am." Allen spoke hesitatingly, for words came slowly to express his meaning. "I didn't know before how bad I was, it seems to have come over me of late, and I can't think I'll ever be fit to call—I mean my life—a *new* life, so as you was saying last evening."

Mr. Anderson paused a moment, then said, "Do you remember when the regiment from Assom Barracks camped out on the Hethering Common last summer?"

"Yes, sir," replied Allen, wondering much what possible connection this could have with the subject.

"Did you watch them at their drill?"

"Yes, sir, nigh on every evening."

"Did you notice how perfectly the men kept time when they marched, how skilfully they accomplished their various movements, wheeling first in one direction and then in another, answering to the word of command in a moment? And did you watch their rifle practice, at what a long range they could hit the target, and even the bull's-eye ring in the centre?"

"Oh yes, sir," Allen again replied. "Me and the Westfalls got to know all the flag signals, we watched them so often."

"Did you know that there were three Hethering men amongst the soldiers?"

"I knew one of them, sir, that was Jacob Saunders, the farm-lad from Mr. Phipps'.

He could never abide the plough, and his mother came round to his enlisting, and seemed reconciled to it when she saw how bravely the men looked."

"Did you see him on parade when the others were showing off?" asked Mr. Anderson.

"No, sir," answered Allen, this time with a laugh. "He was fresh from the plough, and they said he was but a queer hand at first. He was along with some other recruits, and they were taught separately."

"The 'awkward squad,'" said Mr. Anderson, smiling. "I daresay you've heard that's what they call the new recruits. The older soldiers smile at their difficulties, and people who look on think what a difference there is between the trained soldiers and these poor, awkward farm-lads, who know how to handle a spade, indeed, but haven't a notion of marching, and counter-marching, and rifle-practice, and the rest."

"I've wondered sometimes whether Saunders has got like the rest by this time," observed Allen.

"Not a doubt of it he has," said Mr. Anderson. "But, tell me, Allen, when Jacob Saunders wanted to enlist in the Queen's service, did the officer to whom he applied say to him, 'I can't have you, my lad; you haven't a uniform; you haven't a gun; you don't know how to use one if you had. You can't march, and double, and face to the right and to the left at the word of command. You can see what the soldiers do, and the things they do you cannot do; therefore you must give up all idea of entering the Queen's service'?"

"No, sir, I suppose not, or he couldn't have enlisted. They'd have no soldiers at that rate," said Allen, laughing.

"Because soldiers don't grow ready-made; so, instead of being sent away, Jacob Saunders was put down on the list of the names of the regiment; he got his bounty-money and his uniform; he was sworn in as a soldier—all before he had learnt to be an *effective* member of the corps. And then, *after* he had become a soldier——? You tell me the rest, Allen."

"He was taught his duties, I suppose you mean, sir."

"Exactly!" responded Mr. Anderson. "All those well-drilled soldiers, moving together with the regularity of a machine, begin by being utterly ignorant, and, probably, awkward; but, after they have entered the Queen's service, her officers take them in hand, and train and teach them, so that at last they are as effective as before they were willing. And now, Allen," continued Mr. Anderson, "apply what we are talking of to another and a higher enlistment—the *enlistment in the King's own army.* When we heartily and sincerely offer ourselves to be Christ's faithful soldiers and servants to our life's end, trusting for pardon to His atonement, we are accepted all unworthy *as we are;* and then *after* we are enlisted, we are trained and taught in the way of His commandments. The same Saviour who promises forgiveness, promises also to make us holy. 'This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, *I will put My laws into their hearts, and in*

their minds will I write them: and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more' (Heb. x. 16, 17). So you see, Allen, we are Christ's, and may rejoice in belonging to Him *from the time we enter His service.* It remains for us, after we are His soldiers, to try every day more and more so to live that we may do Him honour. 'If ye love Me,' He says, 'keep My commandments.'"

"But, sir, suppose I do what's wrong—and you've said that not a day passes without sin—shan't I be back again where I was? It seems like as if it would be always making a beginning, and never keeping on, so to say."

"No, never back again where you were before, Allen. 'Where you were before' was being a child of wrath, under the curse of God, dead in trespasses and sins. Satan was your master, and sin was your constant state, and a state which corresponded with all your tastes. When you turn to believe that Christ died instead of you, and you close with His offer, to have you as His child, then the curse of God is taken off, you become a

child of God, and heir of everlasting glory; sin becomes hateful, and Satan an enemy against whom you fight, and not a master whom you serve."

"But still, sir—though not as much—still, you say that we do sin; and doesn't that put us wrong with God?"

Mr. Anderson opened his Bible, and read John xiii. 10: "'He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.' The great washing is once for all, Allen, when the defilement of unforgiven sin is purged away through faith in Christ; but so long as we are in this world, there remains the old nature of sin to be fought against; the daily pilgrimage, on our way through this world to Heaven, leaves daily stains which must be brought to Jesus to be washed away in the Fountain opened for all uncleanness. I often connect in my own mind the clause in our Lord's Prayer, which comes next to the prayer for daily bread, with that foot-washing of the disciples. You know it says: 'Give us this day our daily bread, *and forgive us our trespasses.*'"

"Then you mean, sir," broke in Allen—eager to find out whether he had caught Mr. Anderson's meaning—"that we don't get put out of—out of being children of God each time we do what is wrong."

"Exactly so: once *in Christ*, we are no longer criminals under sentence of death, but children in a Father's family—unworthy, unprofitable children; but still *children*. And when we know that we have grieved our Heavenly Father, we go to Him *as children* through Jesus, and the daily sin is washed away for the sake of Jesus Christ's death, just as the first stain of guilt was. But we are not cast out of the Family, thank God. He knows when He takes us to be His children, that we shall, in one sense, never be perfect in this life; but we shall be growing holier, and by and by He will make us perfect for ever."

"I see it now," said Allen, "I see it now; it's all coming out clear to me. But it's so much better than I ever thought it was, sir; it seems as if I could scarce be right in thinking it's all true. You *know* it's true, sir?" there was intense eagerness as he put the question.

"Thank God, I'm sure and certain of it, Allen; all who get to Christ are on the Rock which cannot be moved."

"I feel so afraid of doing what's wrong, there are so many things—" but here Allen broke off suddenly. Only a few days before he had not hesitated to say broadly that one condemned as he was to daily intercourse with Mrs. Watts, could not be expected to keep his temper: but already the new principle at work in his heart was telling upon his words; instinctively he shrank from speaking against another; and so, after a moment's pause, he finished his sentence by saying: "so many things one's tempted to do that are sinful."

"Let us kneel together and pray that God will send you much of His Holy Spirit to enable you to fight bravely as Christ's faithful soldier against all your and His spiritual enemies," said Mr. Anderson. And drawing the boy to his side, he poured out his heart for him once more in earnest supplication.

"Don't ever forget you've enlisted in the *King's Own!*" was his parting word to Allen.

And, as Allen wended his way home, his answer, repeated over and over again in the depths of his heart, was, "Forget it? *Never.*"

And he did not forget. The fresh light which seemed to be thrown upon everything in his daily life was continually keeping him in mind of his enlistment. He seemed now to hold the key which unlocked all difficulties that had so sorely puzzled him before, and, whether on the week days or the Sundays, at his work or at home, or rambling in the country with the Westfalls, the boy-soldier would call to mind Whose he was, and Whom he was pledged to serve, and would find that the new relationship added a thousand-fold to the pleasures he had formerly enjoyed, whilst it supplied a fresh interest in much that had been only a weariness before.

The first Sunday was in itself quite a surprise to Allen. The prayers, the hymns, the chapters read at the Chapel Service, all seemed now to be suited to him: he had lost the sense of being a puzzled spectator, and, realizing at once the presence of Jesus amongst those who had gathered in His name, and

also his own personal acceptance and share in the work of prayer and praise, could scarcely believe it was the same Service that wearied him so greatly before. Parts, too, of the sermon suited him, though he often caught himself wondering that the preacher took so much for granted, and did not put the good news somewhat plainer.

Delightful too in the afternoon was the reading of his Bible, and of the diamond edition of the "Pilgrim's Progress," which was at once the most accessible and the most interesting volume of the literary pyramid in the parlour. He had read bits of it before; now he went straight on without skipping, identifying his own history with that of the Pilgrim at every step: Christian with his burden was himself, Allen, when he was expected to be good, and hoped to go to Heaven, but knew he was unfit to die. Evangelist was clearly Mr. Anderson. The entering in at the wicket-gate, Allen was not quite sure when this was; but thought he was near it when he had that first talk at the Rectory; perhaps the real entering in was down at Mrs. Coleman's,

whose house was affectionately regarded in that connection ever after by him. But when he came to the falling off of the burden at the foot of the cross, and its rolling away into the sepulchre, so that Christian saw it no more, he had no doubts upon his mind, but knew that it was, in his case, when Mr. Anderson had fully explained in their last meeting how Jesus takes the sinner's guilt upon himself; and a tear of joy was trembling in his eye when he remembered how Mr. Anderson had said, "Christ forgives once for all;" and realized that, like Christian, he too should see that burden again no more.

"The narrow way," pursued Allen to himself; "that's, as it says, the way of Holiness along which I must travel all the way till I get to the Heavenly City. I wonder what Mr. Interpreter means—perhaps it's Mr. Anderson still; though that's making him out the same as Evangelist. I shall have to ask him, that's clear; only, as he tells me almost everything I want to know, he must be—there can't be any one else; and then, the Rectory is the Interpreter's house."

But, beyond this point, Allen failed to trace his own story, and could only wonder as he read on to the end, what his "Hill Difficulty" would be like, and whether he should get shut up in Doubting Castle; and the grim fight with Apollyon—was it some real struggle that he would have to go through? And then, would Charlie Westfall prove a brother-pilgrim to him, like Hopeful or Faithful?

Concerning the Celestial City there was no doubt; it meant the same as "The Father's House of many mansions" they had talked about that Sunday on their way to the Cemetery. Mr. Anderson had told him since then, he thought Jesus spoke of the "many mansions" which would be occupied by the great company that no man could number, as *in* the Father's House, because it would be one great happy Home, however many, and however glorious, the dwelling-places of His children; and the orphan boy's heart glowed at the thought. He could never feel homeless now; he could never feel hopeless now; and he could look on steadfastly past all the

changes that might come, and the trials and temptations that were on him already, and feel he had something—a Kingdom that could not be moved—of which the thought would be a stay to him through all his life. In the meantime there was the Way of Holiness to travel; and the young soldier buckled on his armour, and prepared himself for the daily warfare that belongs to the pilgrim's life.

The Westfalls were among the first to find out the change in him. Charlie discovered it with some regret.

"You see," he observed confidentially to his sister, "Allen's grown awfully religious, and I'm quite afraid he'll give up being jolly on Saturdays."

When, however, as time passed on, he found his old playfellow as good a friend as ever, and that his powers for cricket and general capacity for blackberrying and other amusements were undiminished, he came to the conclusion that the change was not a bad thing in its way, and candidly retracted his opinion.

"You see," he remarked, "he *has* grown awfully good, but he's quite as nice as he was before. Now, there's that tool-box he'd promised me ever since he was apprenticed, and I'd quite given up expecting it, he'd forgot it so often, and kept putting it off; and now he's been spending all his leisure time these three weeks at it, and brought it me yesterday, and it's ever so much better than I expected."

Bessie, too, found in her companion only what made him kinder and pleasanter than he had ever been before. She was a gentle, thoughtful girl; and it was not difficult to perceive that although in her simplicity she was unconscious of anything in herself different from what she saw in others, yet she was indeed one of the lambs of the Good Shepherd, believing in His kindness, and looking to Him daily as her Friend and Saviour. Her heart was in advance of her understanding, but Allen helped her on in both; and was himself helped by the kind words spoken to him by her parents, who were really Christian people, though unac-

customed to entering upon the subject of religion with others.

Often, in their Saturday rambles, Allen and Bessie would look up at the stately mansion in Hethering Park, and would remind each other of that talk on the Saturday evening, and rejoice that it was at last clear to both of them how *they* might have a place in the brighter, more glorious mansions that were preparing for the children of God.

Perhaps Mrs. Watts was the most perplexed observer amongst them all of the change that was silently wrought in Allen's life. As a matter of course, she took a hostile tone about it all. Especially the Thursday evening readings, which were continued for a little while until Mr. Anderson left, provoked her animosity. Mr. Watts insisted upon Allen's being allowed to attend them when he pleased, and more than once himself accompanied him; upon each occasion Mrs. Watts would launch out into much disdainful talk as to "new brooms sweeping clean," and "some people who had more obstinacy than wits taking to anything for a change."

"These things won't last," she would often say; "and by and by there'll be something else you'll be helter-skeltering after, and expecting us to fall down and worship the ground you tread on!"

Moreover, in the spirit of duty,—as she always represented it to Allen, and persuaded herself to believe,—she became more than ever eagle-eyed in respect of his faults, coming down upon him with double asperity because "he had taken to setting himself up as better than his neighbours, and it was best to undeceive him."

Vainly did Allen protest against this particularly aggravating charge of setting himself up for being superior to others, and confess that he was not nearly as good as he ought to be, and knew it. But perhaps it was safest for him, on the whole, that his aunt's quick observation and ready tongue *did* bring every real, as well as imaginary, inconsistency to light so surely and so swiftly, whilst on the other hand the many quiet victories which he was daily gaining over pride and impatience, were unmarked. For it kept him very hum-

ble, full of regret that he was not a more worthy child of God (though nothing ever moved him to relinquishing the assurance that a child of God he was, though an undeserving one), and full of clinging dependence on an unseen Friend on Whose constant help he more and more relied.

There were points indeed concerning which even Mrs. Watts grimly noted change for the better.

"I'm not against saying the boy's none the worse for being along with the young gentleman," she observed to her husband one evening as they sat in the kitchen and Allen was at the meeting. "I feel it now for one thing in his boots."

Mr. Watts took his pipe from his mouth and looked up for explanation.

"You see," she continued, "of late he's never forgotten to take off his boots wet days in the scullery, coming in in the evening, and he used to make no end of a mess for me to clean up on the kitchen floor; as obstinate as a pig he was about it, or forgot, which came to the same thing. He's remembered it now all

this rainy weather, and it certainly is one thing less to complain of, and soap saved besides."

Allen was spared the possibility of having his head turned, by not knowing of this piece of flattery!

And so the summer passed on. About the middle of July Mr. Anderson went away, and did not return until after his Ordination late on in October.

A very busy winter followed. The Rector, having now his son's help, was able to organize many fresh parochial schemes, and the warm-hearted, energetic young clergyman seemed everywhere to be infusing into whatever work he had a share in, something of his own brightness and earnestness. He was soon well known in the Orchard, which he appropriated as his particular District, visiting from house to house with unflagging diligence, and stirring up many of those who were accustomed to think of themselves as outcasts, to fresh efforts after goodness and happiness, such as they had long given up in despair.

His influence, too, was felt among the

lads and young working men of the place, whom he gathered gradually to a Sunday afternoon Bible-class of which the numbers increased so fast, that the room in which it was held originally became too small; and, one Sunday, a migration of the whole band to a workmen's reading-room, recently opened, and hitherto unused on the Sunday, took place, greatly to the interest of all the neighbours, who thought it resembled nothing so much as the swarming of a hive of bees.

They soon found out that it was a hive of busy bees too, for it was in this room that, subsequently, all manner of further plans of usefulness were set on foot—plans in which the members of the Sunday Bible-class by degrees learnt to take their share.

Many of these latter were confirmed during the winter, and amongst them Allen. There was a great discussion before this matter was settled. Allen told his uncle that, if it were contrary to his wish, he would give it up, much as he desired it; but his own convictions, the early recollection of his mother, his having been baptized in the

Church of England, and the strong tie which bound him to Mr. Wilfred Anderson, all made him desire it.

"But," he more than once said to his uncle, "I feel I can get good where you go. They teach the same truths, though not put quite so plainly; and I understand now what you meant when you told me long ago it was the same religion; only I like the Church service best, and nothing helps me up so much as that and hearing Mr. Anderson. And I'll promise you you'll know always where I am. I won't make it an excuse for going off anywhere."

So Mr. Watts had the decision left to him; and, after consideration, had given his consent to Allen's being confirmed, and becoming a Communicant in the Church of England. Mrs. Watts, in this matter, found her influence unavailing. Her husband had made up his mind as to what he thought right, and kept to it. Nor had he any cause for regretting his decision.

CHAPTER VIII.

EIGHT HOURS AT THE SEASIDE.

IN the course of the Spring, the long-talked-of branch railway line was completed, which linked Hethering with the Great Corthern Line. The occasion was one of much excitement in the little town. There was a public dinner of the inhabitants, at which speeches were made and congratulations offered, and prognostications uttered as to the importance and celebrity awaiting the place in future.

There was also a farewell tea to the navvies, among whom evening classes, special services, and much personal visitation, had been carried on during the construction of the works; and this entertainment Allen thought quite the most delightful in which he had ever taken part.

The new station was a great object of

interest to the Hethering people, and it was long before the arrival and departure of trains ceased to produce a gentle excitement in a crowd of admiring spectators who would assemble, especially in the evening after work was done, and watch in-coming and out-going locomotives with delighted attention and wonder; the younger members of society hoorahing openly, and their older companions observing in confidence to each other that they lived in strange times, and that Hethering certainly was a rising place.

There seemed, indeed, every prospect of its rising very fast, for fresh buildings appeared to crop up every week; and along most of the principal roads there were announcements to be seen of "desirable lots for sale," almost as plentiful as mushrooms once were in the fields they were so fast invading.

Fresh desires too were rising in people's minds for a sight of new places now made accessible. Those who had been contented before with a trip to Mapleden for the day, bethought them of the pleasures of a whole week's holiday, and went off with their fami-

lies to enjoy the sea breezes at Etcar; others, who could not afford so expensive a trip, could at least take the train as far as Nestlebury, and explore its ruined castle and other celebrities, returning with fresh ideas and a travelled feeling new in those times to the inhabitants.

Etcar was, however, the favourite excursion for all who had the means. The little branch line struck into the Great Corthern, as it happened, just where another branch extended to Etcar, so that from Hethering to the sea was not more than an hour and a half's journey, and before July was over many of the well-to-do inhabitants had made their first acquaintance with the cliffs, and caves, and yellow sands, which have since become so familiar to most.

Still the trip was an expensive one, and therefore, it was a very great event indeed, when early in August the first excursion train was announced at a reduced fare, which placed it within reach of even the humbler classes. The announcement was made on bills of portentous size outside the railway gates; and it

was made by word of mouth in all the principal streets by the town crier, a functionary held in much respect at Hethering, and noted for the imposing manner in which he rang his bell, and the clear sonorous tones, such as could be heard and understood by every one, in which he delivered himself of his proclamations.

His proclamation on the present occasion was to the effect that an excursion train would leave Hethering on the 20th inst., at eight o'clock in the morning, reaching Etcar at ten o'clock, and would return from Etcar at six, reaching Hethering at eight; return fares in covered carriages two shillings, children half price."

It is just possible that fathers and mothers of families would have forgiven the town crier had he been a trifle less distinct than usual on this occasion, and had he not chosen—as he did choose—the very moment when the schools were being dismissed, for standing on the green in front of the gates, and ringing his bell three times over, and repeating as many times, in his most audible manner, the particulars above mentioned.

The results were not difficult to foresee. Away ran the children to their homes full of the news, and there were few families of which the younger members were in such good order that the older members did not from that time become the victims of continual entreaties and petitions for a promise that they too might join in the Etcar excursion.

The subject was discussed in full family conclave at the Westfalls; it was noticed in a passing manner by Allen when he came home to dinner. Later on in the evening it came also under consideration at the Rectory, when the little ones had gone to bed, and Mr. Anderson with his eldest son and daughter were enjoying a quiet twilight half hour, often the only real leisure time their busy lives permitted, on the terrace walk in the garden.

"Would it not be nice," Edith was saying, "if we could manage to take our elder children and make a day's pleasure of it? Fancy their delight at the first sight of the sea!"

"Some of us teachers could club together and manage it easily, for the elder classes,"

said her brother; "then it would be fairer for those who have not as much to spare as we have; it might make jealousy if you and I only took our own."

"If I am not to be the first proposer of the plan," said Mr. Anderson—who was always ready to help on any project of his children—"I can at least be its first subscriber; so Edith, as treasurer of the new scheme, shall put down my name for a sovereign."

"Thank you, dear father," said Edith, gratefully; and then they went on into the discussion of all the details of the plan—what classes should be taken, what provisions provided, and many other particulars which had to be minutely considered if the arrangements were to be carried out successfully.

It was decided, after a consultation of teachers the following day, that the first divisions of the boys' and girls' Sunday schools respectively and the first classes of the week-day school, should be included in the invitation; and the announcement was made to them at once of the intended pleasure.

To describe the tumult of joy and expectation, the wild, intense eagerness of childish delight with which one and all received the invitation, would be simply impossible. The reader must be referred back, in order to understand it, to certain pictures,—dim, perhaps, with the lapse of years, but which are stowed away in some secret cabinet of memory, and not altogether effaced,—of moments in very young life when some pleasure, vague, mysterious, and hitherto considered far out of reach, has been suddenly brought from out of the region of the impossible, and we have felt it almost too good to be true, and yet it was going to be, and it seemed like dreaming, yet, we knew we were wide awake.

"The sea, the sea—the bright blue sea,"

was the popular song of the neighbourhood for the next fortnight. The children learnt it at the school, and sang it in their homes, and echoed it about the streets, until it became almost as familiar as "God Save the Queen."

In the meantime the plan amplified as the

days went on into quite a parochial pic-nic, including parents of children, former pupils, members of Bible-classes and their families; indeed, all who were united by any parochial link whatsoever. These defrayed their own expenses, and were to bring their own provisions; but such as ranked with Mr. Anderson's party, were to share the privilege kindly accorded him by the Etcar Squire—who was an old personal friend—of admission into the Park grounds, which were closed to strangers; and as these Park grounds included a fine grassy reach under the shade of magnificent old trees, which had weathered a hundred storms, and commanding the most picturesque views in the neighbourhood, those who had leave to make it their camping-ground for the day were fortunate indeed. It was agreed that people were to bring their dinners, and an enterprising Etcar tradesman undertook to supply them with tea at sixpence a-head.

Would the weather hold up? Every person boasting the slenderest amount of weather wisdom was persecuted for an opinion, and,

it having been discovered by some anxious investigators that "Moore's Almanack" indicated the 20th as "rainy, with heavy squalls," serious consultation was held as to the advisability of memorializing the Directors to change the day.

Happily, however, Moore's Almanack is not infallible; and the 20th dawned so bright and sunshiny, that when, with banners flying, the eager young travellers marched off to the station, it was generally agreed they could not have chosen a more lovely day if they had had one made on purpose.

Once more we must decline any attempt at putting into words all that is meant by 'the first sight of the sea'—that wonderful, dazzling, flashing, rolling, restless sea, keeping time with its music to its endless motion; breaking into play with the children as the waves plash on the shore, yet quietly and steadily tracing on those fickle sands the lines that tell of its hidden power as the tides ebb and flow. Much vigilant watch had to be kept, lest unwary explorers should be surrounded on the sea-weedy rocks, and merry

were the peals of laughter over the various little adventures—so new to inland children—which befell them in their games with "their great new playfellow," as Mr. Wilfred Anderson called the sea.

Allen, and one or two others of the Bible-class, distinguished by blue badges, acted as stewards, and rendered important assistance to the higher authorities in all matters of arrangement.

The pleasures of the day seemed inexhaustible. There were caverns to be explored; there was an island to be gone to in boats; there was a hill to be climbed, from the top of which you could see the Frankton Lighthouse. Then dinner was at one o'clock under the trees in the Park, and all the Hethering party who came with Mr. Anderson were in great glory, feeling the superiority of their position to that of other excursionists, of whom there were hundreds—many from quite distant places on the main line. For the shade of the great trees was wonderfully refreshing after the morning's exercise, and the Squire and his family and servants were

"The pleasures of the day seemed inexhaustible.

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all out helping on every arrangement for the comfort of those whom they chose to consider as their visitors. And there was a picturesque ruined tower near the house, which they went to see afterwards, and concerning which the Squire narrated a marvellous old legend; all of which added materially to the enjoyment of the day.

Then ensued a tremendous search for shells and sea-weeds before tea, and a great filling of pockets and handkerchiefs with seaside treasures, to be displayed to admiring friends at home. Indeed, many of the children, not content with shells and sea-weed, were discovered to be tenderly cherishing little live crabs, which they hoped might be persuaded to naturalize themselves in the gardens at Hethering.

The question was started amongst them at tea, who had enjoyed themselves most during the day. But it was a question more easily proposed than answered. Indeed, so many laid claim to the distinction, that Mr. Anderson declared it was impossible to decide amongst them; and that, like many

other historic points of importance, it must be left undetermined.

Charlie Westfall was sure that he had enjoyed most pleasures, and was counting them off on his fingers to the companion seated at his side:—Going in the train; rushing down to the sea; throwing stones at the waves; riding a donkey; having ginger-beer; going in a boat; dinner; climbing Etcar Hill; caverns; finding shells; finding four crabs and a jelly-fish (the latter, it may be observed, in company with the crabs, being at that moment loose in his pocket, and experiencing anything but pleasure in its captivity); and his companion was entering a protest against each of these counting separately in the list of enjoyments, when the bell rang for silence.

The day's proceedings were coming to an end. Mr. Anderson said a few kind, hearty words to all the party, and then gave out a Hymn, which had been learnt before, and was immediately taken up in chorus, the parts sounding out sweetly as the singers gathered round in little groups:—

"What shall we render,
Thou Heavenly Friend, to Thee,
For care so tender,
For grace so free?
What shall we bring for all the love
Thy rich and bounteous hand bestows?
From Thee, the source of joy above,
All life and blessing flows.
What shall we render,
Thou Heavenly Friend, to Thee,
For care so tender,
For grace so free?

"Lo the lofty mountains
High to Thee their summits raise;
Bright sparkling fountains
Sing to Thy praise.
The pleasant fruits, the smiling flow'rs,
To Thee their grateful offerings bring;
And cheerful birds, with all their pow'rs,
To Thee sweet anthems sing.
What shall we render, etc.

"Earth's thousand voices
Loud their Maker's grace proclaim;
Nature rejoices,
Praising Thy name.
Since we have spirits that must live,
When all things else shall fade and die,
May we eternal honour give,
And praise Thy name on high.
Then shall we render
True honour, Lord, to Thee,
For care so tender,
For love so free!"

Scarcely had the echoes of the last verse died away than it was time to form in order for the march to the station.

How hard it was to realize that the day was really coming to an end! On the one hand it seemed—looking back at it—such a long, long time since the early breakfast that morning at Hethering; on the other, the hours had separately and collectively flown so fast, that at four o'clock it had been hard to believe it was three; and at five o'clock it was on record that several parties had been found peacefully wandering about, and imagining they had still plenty of time to spare.

There was clearly no time now to spare; the muster-roll was being read, and soon the procession was on its way back to the station, the children singing, as they went, an old school song, of which the chorus—

"We're on our journey home!"

blended with the deep roll of the waves as they passed along the shore and bade farewell to the sea.

Very different to the quiet, orderly pro-

ceedings in Sir Morton Grange's Park was the scene of utter confusion and bustle that ensued at the station.

Delightful confusion! delightful bustle! it seemed at first to the young people who loved excitement; but very much the reverse of delightful to the grown-up members of the party, upon whom devolved the burden of responsibility.

Some mistake had occurred with regard to the carriages which Mr. Anderson had counted upon having reserved for his party. Whose the mistake was, and how it had originated, there was no time to ascertain. Mr. Anderson produced from his pocket-book the letter from the traffic-manager, agreeing to such reservation for the number specified, and the station-master admitted that his claim was indisputable. But in the meantime, the general mass of the excursionists had taken their places promiscuously in the train, and, with the inadequate staff of porters available, it seemed impossible to attempt a re-arrangement which should at once have regard to the several destinations of the

passengers, and should also admit of all the Hethering party being kept together.

"I'll do the best I can for you, sir," said the official, politely; but with a rueful glance at the columns advancing under the Hethering banners; "I'll clear some of the carriages, but I put it to yourself, sir, whether with the 6.20 express to meet the up mail on the Great Corthern, I should have time to change them all the way down."

The scramble became worse and worse; the grumbling excursionists got mixed up with the children, and a general panic, lest they should be left behind, spread amongst them, resulting in a wild rush on the carriages, helped forward by the porters, whose one idea was to clear the platform as fast as possible, and get rid of the inconvenient throng.

"It's dreadful!" gasped Edith, who came up with the last detachment, and was involved in the worst of the confusion as she anxiously struggled to a corner of the platform, and counted her class, to make sure that none were missing.

To help in the general ordering of things was beyond her; the utmost she could do was to attend to the woes of the twelve little girls, who were holding each other tightly, according to orders, and clinging to herself as their central support, and to hope that in time somebody would be able to attend to them, and find them places.

"Teacher, Sarah Jane's crying, and I am *so* frightened."

"Teacher, Lilly's dropped a big bull's-eye just outside the door we came in at!"

"Teacher, the porter's been so rude, he nearly knocked me down!"

It was rather a dismal chorus. Edith did her best to comfort the children, imploring them not to be frightened, and at any cost to keep fast hold of each other and of herself. Then she found time to take counsel with a young lady friend who had drifted to the same corner of the platform.

"It's a comfort to have some one to speak to," she said. "I got separated from papa nearly ten minutes ago, and Wilfred disappeared at the same time. And in this dread-

ful confusion, one scarcely knows what to do!"

"The worst that can happen," replied her friend, "is being left behind; it would be inconvenient, but still——"

"Better," interrupted Edith, "than losing these small people in the struggle, and having them shipped off to all parts of the British Dominions. I rescued one who was on the point of being shut up in a Scarrowgate carriage, and another might have been in Scotland to-night if I had not interposed. But now happily they are all together, and I think the best plan is to wait here until we are fetched."

"No mortal power will fit us into that train as it stands now," remarked her friend; "they will have to put on fresh carriages."

Higher authorities had arrived at the same conviction, and the order was just being given to put another carriage on. The station-master, watch in hand, hurried forward the proceedings, whilst he adjured Mr. Anderson not to create an instant's delay, but to have the remainder of his party ready to step in the moment the addition was made.

"Time to spare for you now, Edith," said Mr. Anderson, beckoning his daughter and her little flock forwards. None of your class missing I hope? Wilfred is scouring the premises with one of his lads to make sure we leave nobody behind; calling over names is an utter impossibility."

Edith was thankful that she could answer for all her children, and, much relieved to find the bustle subsiding, stood waiting at her father's side with the group, now a comparatively small one, of the passengers who had not yet found places. They were mostly Hethering people; mothers of the children, a few women who had made up a party together, and a detachment of boys belonging to Charlie Westfall's class, besides her own little girls.

"Over thirty, all sizes," was the station-master's estimate, as he glanced at them, and then, turning to Mr. Anderson, he said—

"We're putting you on a carriage behind the brake van, sir, as far as the Junction; there'll be plenty of room forwards after that."

By this time the empty carriage was beside them.

"Edith," said Mr. Anderson, hastily; "can you get on without me? I believe Wilfred and I must both be in the other part of the train."

"Famously, papa, thank you!" replied Edith, and in another moment they had taken their places, the rapid slamming of doors was heard, and the cry, "Train going on!" was drowned by the shrill whistle which announced their departure from Etcar Station.

CHAPTER IX.

EAST BANK TUNNEL.

"I THINK we are grandly off," remarked Edith, settling herself down and making quiet arrangements for the comfortable disposition of her little company in one of the open compartments of the large third-class carriage in which they found themselves.

"Now, Bessie, I promised you should sit by me going home. And, Clara, you and Polly are to have places at the window as far as Malton, on that side, and, Lilly, you at the window opposite me, on this side. Sarah, you must be a good, kind girl, and make a comfortable pillow of yourself for Fanny, who will soon be fast asleep; and you can see out nicely, too, for Lilly is so much smaller than you."

Mrs. Hagar, in the next compartment,

watched the proceedings with admiring interest, even venturing to address an observation upon the strength of companionship to Mrs. Watts, who sat beside her, to the effect that "it *was* wonderful to see the young lady, never so much as thinking of herself, and quite taken up with the children."

But as Mrs. Watts considered Mrs. Hagar socially below herself, she vouchsafed but short reply, and looked steadily out of the window in a manner that did not encourage further conversation.

In the third, and farthest compartment, Allen, in charge of Charlie's class, found ample employment in organizing a systematic change of places, by which all should enjoy in turn the coveted window seats, and in persuading the noisy ones that the occasion was not one for promiscuous shouting and singing.

"Teacher, when will the tunnel come?" The inquiry was from one of the little girls.

"Exactly the twentieth time, I have counted, that you have been asked that question," observed Miss Anderson's friend.

And Edith, nothing daunted, consulted her watch, and gave it as her opinion that they might reach it in less than five minutes.

"Teacher" — from another quarter — "Lilly's frightened; she doesn't want to be at the window; may I change places with her?"

And, accordingly a sturdy Jane, who had no notion of being frightened at anything, took the place by the window; while Lilly, nestling close beside Bessie, contrived to slip her hand into her teacher's for comfort and protection, just as a loud whistle proclaimed their entrance into the tunnel.

A peal of laughter welcomed the sudden darkness; and the shouts of the children, together with the rattling of the train, produced such a deafening noise that the timid ones were not a little frightened.

"It's so dark, Teacher," Miss Anderson at last heard from a little sobbing voice close at her side; "and such a dreadful noise."

"Very dark," responded Edith cheerily, struggling to make herself heard in the general din—"yes, very dark; but it will be only

for a minute or two, and then it will be all bright again."

Only a minute or two! What fun it was for most of them! The minutes seemed long, though, in the darkness.

"They always *do* seem long," explained Edith to the little ones near her, "when you are thinking about them. Let us see if we can count sixty before we get out of the tunnel."

The notion pleased the children, and counting in chorus, began amid much laughter. But sixty, seventy, eighty—they reached a hundred at last—and still they were not out of the tunnel.

Edith was puzzled. True they were going very slowly indeed when they entered it; but, even at the slowest pace, it seemed to her as if they ought to have got through before this. Then, too, as the children's voices were hushed from a sort of vague fear of the continued darkness, and the boys stopped jumping about, the stillness struck upon her as something unaccountable. There was none of the usual vibration of the car-

riage; no sound of the engine. She hastily let down her window and looked out.

Backwards, forwards, there was utter darkness; not a glimmer of light in either direction; and, when she raised her voice and called, the sound died away as in a vault, and then all was still and grave-like. She shivered with a sickening sense of apprehension, and drew in her head from the window. The truth flashed upon her in a moment.

Yes, she knew it all! Their carriage, so hastily added to the train, had become detached, and they had been left behind in the tunnel, which was little short of a mile in length. The signal-man at the other side would telegraph the line clear; and the Express—yes, she must face it at once—the Express would have started ere this, and might be upon them almost immediately. Then there came to her mind thoughts of the morning: the merry start for the station; the light-hearted chatter on the journey; the ringing voices, and pealing laughter; the sunny sands and sparkling sea; and the wild, triumphant joy of the children. And all this

had been but an hour ago. What a bright scene it had been; what a successful day of pleasure. And *now*—this was to be the ending! How could she tell it them—these laughing, merry children? How could she break it to them, that there, in the darkness, a terrible death might be before them; that a very few minutes might be all that was left to them before the great realities of eternity? There are moments which seem a lifetime, and this was one to Edith. She lifted her heart in silent prayer; and then, groping her way to as central a position as she could reach, with trembling voice asked for silence.

With her own class her gentle authority was at all times sufficient to ensure immediate obedience; and something in the awe-struck tones of her voice caught the attention of the others, so that there was a stillness in which you might have heard a pin drop.

"I want to tell you," she began, speaking hurriedly, but with great clearness, "what I think is the matter. I must say it quickly, for we may not have long. We are left behind in the tunnel. Before long the Ex-

press will be up; we shall have an accident, and perhaps some of us may die. We must not waste time—try not to cry—but let us pray. Only God can help us."

There was the tremble still in her voice as she began the familiar words of the "General Confession." She could not see how, in the dark, the lads took off their caps, and reverently bowed their heads; but she could hear, and it helped her, the earnest voices with which all joined in, though their sobs were almost stifling.

"Save, Lord, we beseech Thee," she added. "There is none other but only Thou canst help us. Forgive us for Jesus' sake. If it be Thy will, deliver us; and if not, may we meet in Heaven!"

Edith was almost broken down before she had finished. She rallied again bravely, however; and, after a momentary pause, spoke once more.

"Listen," she said; "I have thought what is the best thing to do. The doors are locked, and we cannot break them open; but could one of you boys contrive to get out by the

window, and run back to tell of our being here? You *might* be in time."

The answer came from the farthest corner of the carriage:—"Allen's trying, ma'am; he's part way out."

It was a moment of extreme suspense. The old-fashioned third-class carriage, with its small windows high up, made the attempt a difficult one, and Allen almost failed. At last, however, though with many bruises and wrenches which he bore heroically, he got clear of the window, and came heavily, but on his feet, to the ground.

"The flag," exclaimed Edith, hastily. "Give him the flag!"

It was one they had carried in triumph during the day, waving it merrily in the sea-breezes, and challenging any other class to produce its rival. Now its crimson colour might tell the tale of danger when there would not be time for speech; and Allen bore it swiftly away in the darkness, every chance of safety depending, humanly speaking, upon its being seen in time by the driver of the advancing train.

That the chance was small and slender Edith knew. Any attempt at getting out of the windows would, she felt, be useless. In the darkness the little ones could not accomplish it without accident; the grown-up people were too large, and the boys were frightened from making any further attempt, one of their number having hurt himself badly in trying to follow Allen, and having been pulled in again by his companions.

So there was nothing for it but to sit there and wait for what the next few minutes would bring them.

The terrified children clung closely together; agonized expressions of grief burst from one and from another of the grown-up travellers who could realize even more than the sobbing children the fearful nature of the danger in which they found themselves! And there were some who thought less of the immediate peril than of that which might come after.

Mrs. Watts was down upon her knees wringing her hands in utter despair; almost convulsed with anguish, she could only repeat over and over again the same words, "Lord,

have mercy upon me a sinner. I have a name to live and am dead." While Mrs. Hagar kindly pressed the hand which had sought out hers in the darkness, and was clutching it with the energy of a drowning grasp, and said in firm, trustful tones, " I'm sure He hears you; and He died to take our punishment for us; believe He forgives you, for He says, 'Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.'"

Charlie, away in his corner, had lost with Allen the only one he could look to for help and comfort, and was crying sadly to himself. " I'm not fit to die," he murmured, " I've not wanted to be good. Perhaps though Jesus will forgive me. Oh! do, Lord, and don't let us die, oh! do help us."

His little sister Bessie, generally so timid, was less frightened. She was nestling by her teacher; and Miss Anderson, disregarding her own terror, was trying to comfort her little ones.

" Remember, darlings, Jesus is near to us even in this dreadful place, and He will not let anything happen but what is best to those

who trust in Him. Just one minute, perhaps, of pain, and then the beautiful bright Home we have so often talked of! How glad we shall be then, gladder even than this morning when we were all so happy." Her own words came back to her with a fresh meaning, "Very dark for a minute or two and then it will all be bright."

"The House of many mansions, and the pearly gates, and the golden streets," whispered Bessie. "Teacher, I'm not so frightened now."

"Do you think you could sing, Bessie—you and the others?" And Edith's trembling voice began:—

> "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
> In a believer's ear;
> It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
> And drives away his fear."

It acted as a spell upon all in the carriage, and tremulous voices from many besides the little girls joined in. It was a favourite hymn with them at Hethering, and brought back vividly to their recollection happy gatherings at the Church, or in the dear Sunday-school,

such as they would see again no more, which already seemed to belong to a past life.

Hark! what was it that brought the sad sweet strains to a sudden close; the words died away on the trembling lips, and a fresh terror struck every heart! That shrill distant whistle was too clear to be mistaken, sounding louder and louder, till it ended with a kind of shriek! A moment more, and the thunder of the train was heard.

Closer, closer—it was coming—it was upon them. It was past hope now—the worst must have happened; Allen had been too late, and they must die. No one thought of the possibility of escape should there be an accident. Another moment, and then—*eternity.*

The moment passed. There was a deafening noise—a flashing of lights—a shouting of voices—and then the sound died away in the distance, and the imprisoned travellers knew the danger had passed.

"Teacher, it's all dark still," murmured Bessie; "and not beautiful, like what you told me."

"Perhaps we shall wait to see that, Bessie,

after all," replied Miss Anderson, with a fresh hope thrilling in her voice. "Waken up from your fright, my child, we are in the tunnel still; but I hope we may get out of it. They *must* have seen us as they passed. There is a chance of escape if they did."

A chance? Ay, and more than a chance! For there are lights again, and friendly shouts, and a whistle—this time not loud and defiant, but gentle and pleasant, as if wishing to give immediate notice that the slow thump, thump of the engine which was approaching meant safety, and not destruction. It had stopped now at a little distance, and men with lanterns were walking along the line.

"All right! No fear!" was the cry; and it was answered by a ringing cheer from the boys, which seemed as if it could not die away, so eagerly was it renewed again and again, with an energy that told of the rebound from death and despair, to life and hope.

With Edith the reaction was overwhelming, and her tears were falling fast, when one of the engine-men flashed his light into the carriage, and expressed it as his opinion that

'they had had a rare escape, and been a deal frightened, but they were all safe now, and no mistake about it.' No one seemed able at first to answer the friendly stoker's congratulations, but presently Bessie's fixed gaze of sad surprise met his. "I don't think he's at all like the angels in the pictures," she observed sorrowfully, but in clear distinct childish tones, as she scanned his face, "he's dirty, not beautiful, in white robes, like what you told me. And oh! Teacher, you're crying about it too."

Edith was smiling through her tears by the time Bessie stopped to draw breath, while the stoker, who was possibly rather taken aback by the personal tone of her remarks, made answer to himself as he descended from the window, that "in respect of angels he could not be supposed to know their habits of a certainty, but if there were such things as guardian angels, as he had heard tell on, they had had something to do that day, For a narrower escape he never knew of."

Allen's appearance among the rescue party was the first thing that brought the child to herself; and then, like all the rest, she was in

hot haste to have the doors opened, and get out as fast as possible.

This, however, was not to be. The men united their strength, and pushed the carriage to the waiting engine, which in a very short time drew them safely out at the Etcar side of East Bank Tunnel.

Daylight again! Beautiful evening sunshine streaming upon the sloping hill-side on the one hand; a lazy group of cows peacefully ruminating in the meadow on the other among the long shadows, and looking as if though far too well accustomed to railway traffic to be disconcerted at anything that might happen, they yet took a kind and tranquil interest in the proceedings. The little cottage, perched in a hollow half-way up the bank, was sending forth a small column of smoke from its chimney, and an anxious young wife from its door; for the anxious young wife was at a loss as to what kept her husband from coming in to his tea as was his wont after the up Express, when he had changed his signals, and she had come out to find with much astonishment what seemed to her an utter confusion of people and carriages

on the line. Further on the up Express train, from which the engine had been detached for its service in the tunnel, the doors standing open, and the passengers all clustering on the green. It was a picture that stamped itself for life upon the memories of our friends as they emerged from the darkness, and felt the simple every-day world more beautiful than they had ever thought it before.

"He hath brought me out of darkness into His marvellous light," Edith was softly murmuring to herself when she got out of the carriage, and sat down on the grassy bank. She was trembling all over and could not stand; a few moments of absolute rest were a necessity for her. Happily also, there seemed no occasion for further exertion on her part, for the guard took the responsibility of arranging about the next stage of their journey, and the kind-hearted passengers vied with one another in attentions to the children.

A genial elderly lady found her way to Edith's side. "Poor child," she exclaimed, in motherly tones, that in themselves brought a world of relief to the young girl's over-

"Edith sat down on the grassy bank. She was trembling all over, and could not stand."

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wrought nerves. "It has been too much for you! There now, a little eau-de-Cologne will refresh you," and a perfect stream of it accordingly descended on Edith's handkerchief and sprinkled her forehead. Then sitting down beside her on the grass, the benevolent traveller proceeded in Good-Samaritan fashion to further measures for the benefit of her patient, producing successively, from her travelling bag, a glass of wine, a case of sandwiches, and a bag of sponge cakes, all following each other quite as if it were a matter of course that they should do so, and anything further that might be wished for could be obtained from the same source. Edith laughingly rebelled against being more taken care of, and was soon sufficiently recovered to hear with interest all the details of how the collision had been averted.

It seemed that the waving of Allen's red flag as he rushed from the mouth of the tunnel had attracted the notice of the signalman only as the Express came in sight; there was just time, and only time, to hoist the danger signal, and so bring the train to a stand; a moment more, and it would have been too

late. As soon as Allen's story was heard, the engine had been detached and sent to fetch them out of the tunnel. The down train had come up in the meantime, and the guard, finding no other assistance was needed, had promised to telegraph from the next station to the Junction.

"Then it was Allen, after all, who was the means of saving us," remarked Edith; "the other train would not have been in time."

"Ay—and of saving *us* too," rejoined her companion. "Of course, you have had a wonderful escape; but, when one comes to think of it, why, so have we; for the accident would have been a terrible one to us all."

As for Allen, he was quite a hero. All the gentlemen gathered round to shake hands with him, and great was his astonishment when one of them placed in his hands a sum of money which had been hastily collected amongst the passengers, telling him that he had been instrumental in saving many lives, and they wished him to purchase a silver watch as a memorial of the occasion, and to

have inscribed upon it the name of the place, and the date of this, their eventful meeting. It was in vain that Allen protested against receiving a reward for doing his duty, no one would hear of a refusal. It was a very trifling token of gratitude, they said, and it would be a pleasure to all to think that the brave lad who had been the means of saving them had something to remind him how much they had esteemed his courage.

By this time, the excursion carriage had been shunted into a siding, and the engine was re-fastened to the train. All the passengers willingly consented to being somewhat crowded, as far as Malton Junction, rather than submit to any further delay; and soon the whole party were started once more. It was not without a shudder that the fearful tunnel was entered again; but the Express went swiftly, and it was soon passed through and the Junction reached, where Mr. Anderson was found waiting on the platform to take charge of the Hethering party.

The excursion train had gone on, so places had been reserved in the ordinary mail train,

and it was unspeakable comfort to Edith to find herself in a quiet corner by her father's side, his hand in hers, and his face—that she had thought never to see again—turned towards her with a look of tender solicitude which told something of what he felt in having her spared to be there beside him once more.

"But oh! papa," she said, after a time, "I *was* frightened—dreadfully frightened—though I tried hard not to give in, and no one knew it. It came all over me with such a rush when I first felt what had happened; my life *stopped* all at once—it seemed terrible! I thought in an instant of everything: you coming home, and all of them, and my not being there; and all the things I was doing just broken off in the middle. I can understand now what Hezekiah meant by his life being cut off like a weaver's web. You will think me foolish, papa, only you know I tell you everything:—in that moment I even remembered about a letter I was writing to our Charlie, and had not time to finish yesterday, and fancied how it would come to him with the news of my death at the end of it.

I remembered exactly the last words I had written, and thought about your finding it there on my desk when I was gone. Do you think me very foolish, papa?"

"Foolish! No, my child," replied her father, "it was most natural. Only tell me, Edith—tell me—it was not that you doubted what was to come after, you were not shaken in your faith, even by that terrible shock to your nerves? You knew, darling, did you not, that it was all well with you for eternity?"

"Yes, papa," replied Edith with a long-drawn breath; "yes, in that first minute I went over the grounds of my belief. Oh! the unspeakable comfort of not having to depend upon anything in my own life; it seemed to me just one sin as I looked at it there, with eternity straight before me; but I felt, if I am a great sinner, Jesus is a greater Saviour; He knows I am depending alone upon Him, and, papa, though I felt almost stunned, and was trembling all over, I knew I had my feet upon a Rock, and I was helped to speak quite quietly."

"You would have been as safe, my

Edith," said Mr. Anderson, "even if you had not been able at the moment to realize it. Thank God, however, that you had the comfort."

"Papa," Edith resumed, "was it dishonouring to God that I so recoiled from sudden death? You know I have often quoted the old saying, 'Whom the gods love die young,' and have said how much I should prefer early death; but then I have always fancied it coming gently and gradually, as it did with dear mamma, who seemed to see Heaven before she left earth. But it was so different with me; though I tried to think about the brightness beyond, I felt, oh! such a horror of what was to come first, and such an unspeakable gladness when I thought we had a chance of escape."

"In long illness both mind and body are gradually prepared for the change," replied Mr. Anderson; "the links are severed little by little; but it is very different in the sudden prospect of a violent death: all the young life in its freshness of health and strength, rebels against it. Far from dishonouring your

Heavenly Father, dear child, I think you glorified Him by trusting even in the midst of your most natural terror. And you succeeded, did you not, in controlling any appearance of panic? Tell me all about it."

Edith briefly related what had passed, touching but lightly, however, on her own share in the proceedings, of which Mr. Anderson only heard from others.

"It was brave of Allen, papa, was it not, to venture back? and you know, humanly speaking, it was he who saved us? The passengers told me that the collision must have happened before the down train entered the tunnel, if the Express had not been stopped by the danger signal."

"Very brave, Edith," said her father, who, however, was privately of opinion that it required at least as much courage for his child to remain in the darkness comforting her companions as for Allen to fly in search of help. But with her there at his side, and knowing that but for Allen's exertions she might have been numbered amongst the dead, he could say no word but in the lad's praise.

They were reaching Hethering by this time. Half the little town was at the station, for the news had spread fast, and many and hearty were the congratulations the travellers received upon their escape.

Before they parted, those of them who belonged to Mr. Anderson's congregation agreed that, on the Sunday morning, they should unite in returning thanks for the gracious Providence which had preserved them from danger.

And when on that Sunday morning, in the General Thanksgiving, there was mention made of 'special mercies lately vouchsafed to some members of the congregation,' there were few present whose hearts did not beat in sympathy, and their eyes glisten as they glanced towards the bowed heads of the young people in the chancel, where the elder Sunday School and Bible Classes sat with their teachers, and united with them in a fervent expression of grateful praise.

CHAPTER X.

CHANGES.

MRS. WATTS was never quite the same after that alarm in East Bank Tunnel—that first occasion in her whole life when she had felt herself face to face with death and eternity.

Her altered and subdued manner struck both Mr. Watts and Allen, who agreed in thinking that there must have been a severe shock upon the nerves, and hoped it would soon wear off. But when, a few weeks after, being alone with her husband one Sunday afternoon, she suddenly burst into tears, and sobbed as though her heart would break, the good man, who had never before seen his wife under any strong emotion, rushed to the hasty conclusion that she must be seriously ill, and seizing his hat, was about to hurry off

for the doctor, much perturbed in his mind by the unwonted occurrence. He was detained, however, by his wife.

"It's not illness, James," she said; "it's not illness, it's *misery*. I found it all out that day in the tunnel, and I've tried to shake it off since, and I can't. I've a name to live, I've thought myself all right, and I am—oh! I know it now, just lost, cast out, a dead soul. And it's been against the Spirit. I'm past forgiveness."

"But it's not past forgiveness, if you want Him," replied Mr. Watts, feeling that it was he who should comfort his stricken wife, yet with a helpless sense of not knowing what to say, which fortunately led him to look up for light and guidance. "You're not worse than I was," he continued; "and it was made clear to me how I could be safe, and it's clear for you too, if you could only see it. But I'm always such a bad one for not being anyways able to put things straight in words."

"For *you*, perhaps—no, for certain," replied Mrs. Watts, making a great effort to control her feelings. "But not for *me*, James.

It's been a leaden weight on my heart ever since I came back from Etcar; I've sinned past forgiveness. I've tried to offend one of His little ones; and it would have been better that I had had a mill-stone about my neck, and been drowned in the depths of the sea."

"Oh, wife, wife!" exclaimed poor Watts ruefully; "you are remembering all the Scripture words against yourself; but there's promises too; I can read you a bit of them now, and maybe you'll get comfort along of my doing it."

He opened the Bible at the first chapter of the first Epistle of St. John, reading in slow, measured tones. When he came to the words: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," he paused. "There's a deal in that," he remarked, looking up with a sort of pitiful entreaty in his face that she would be comforted, and in the hope that the same precious words, which had brought consolation to so many before, might avail for her. But the light did not come.

"Ah! yes, it's true for the worst of sinners, but then it's for them as hasn't sinned against the truth, and put it from them; but for me that knew it and despised it"——Mrs. Watts clearly could find no comfort as yet.

Allen felt much perplexed by the state of affairs when he came in to tea at five o'clock. It was not his aunt's silence alone that struck him, but her expression of face, her manner, everything about her so strangely different to her usual style. Her very mode of pouring out the tea was changed—she was so listless and absent.

"I've never seen her like it before," he remarked when, by successful strategy, he and his uncle got together in the back kitchen for a moment's consultation. "Two large lumps of sugar in my cup of tea—I felt there was something strange when she put them in, and then never so much as a word like 'Be careful, you're sure to break them,' when I washed up after."

The two looked at each other with a forlorn sense of bewilderment; it was so strange to them to experience anything but sharpness

and briskness in Mrs. Watts's government, that they felt, as they expressed it, quite lost, and wondered much what would come of it.

"She's very bad, I think," observed Mr. Watts, in a guarded whisper. "I wanted her to let me fetch the doctor more than an hour ago, but she wouldn't."

"It's all along of that time in the tunnel," replied Allen. "She's never been the same since."

The consultation was, however, at this stage, interrupted by the person whom it chiefly concerned.

"I'm going out for a bit," she said, looking in with her bonnet and shawl on, "maybe I'll join you at chapel; but if you'll leave the key on the ledge as usual, I can let myself in."

"I don't like losing sight of her," observed Watts, as the door closed after her. "In the low way she's in now, she wants looking after. We'll just take a stroll, and keep an eye on her without seeming to."

The stroll was of a rather spasmodic character, inasmuch as Mr. Watts's plan for "keeping an eye without seeming to" upon his wife,

involved giving her the start to the first corner, then bringing up the distance at a run, and looking stealthily from under cover at the next, until she made a fresh turn, when the same process had to be repeated.

"Bless the woman! where has she gone to?" he exclaimed, panting for breath, and peering round at the fifth corner.

"She's not there of a certainty," rejoined his nephew, looking also down the street they had come to. And yet it seemed impossible that Mrs. Watts should have gained upon them so as to have reached even the nearest turning beyond.

"Not a sign of her!" murmured the anxious husband, without pausing to ask himself under the circumstances what sign he might have expected short of his wife's own personal appearance. "And she ain't got no friends neither, along here. Orchard Street——"

"Uncle!" Allen exclaimed. "Mrs. Hagar! Could she have gone there? She's not a friend of hers; but still it's the only place along here we know of."

Mr. Watts's original strategic scheme had not included any plan for inspecting other people's front parlours, and looking in at windows was understood at Hethering to be a distinct breach of manners. But as they drew near to No. 15, it was impossible to resist stealing a hasty glance through Mrs. Hagar's window—now as clear and bright, as formerly dirty and obscure; and which would indeed have revealed the whole interior of Mrs. Hagar's parlour to the outside gaze, had it not been for the pots of fuchsia and geranium, which interposed a tolerably effective screen. Not so effective, however, but that Allen caught sight as they passed of Mrs. Watts's Sunday bonnet, and, as he expressed it, "a good piece of her face;" and Mr. Watts, in like manner, was sure he had noticed Mrs. Hagar herself, seated close up to the geraniums, beside his wife. Mrs. Watts was safe, then, for the present, and they were free to go on to evening Service without misgiving.

It was indeed to the once-despised little house in Orchard Street that Mrs. Watts had

found her way. Mrs. Hagar, on opening the door to a very gentle knock, to her inexpressible astonishment had found her standing outside. Greater still was Mrs. Hagar's surprise when her visitor burst into tears, and said she had come because she knew that she, Mrs. Hagar, had found the true way of peace and happiness, and she wished to learn it also.

What passed subsequently between the two women was never very clearly related by either of them; but when in the course of the evening Mrs. Watts returned home, Mrs. Hagar walking back all the way with her, the stony look had passed away, and there was a quiet, hushed expression on her countenance as if a storm were over, and a calm beginning.

"I believe I see it all now," she said to her husband some days after, breaking through the silence which had lasted till then, on the subject of her feelings. "I'm like beginning life again, now; all that's gone before has been wasted. I feel the littlest child before me in the race I'm starting on; but, by God's

blessing, I can see the right and the good way, and He'll keep me in it."

"I was building my house upon the sand," she resumed after a moment's pause; "and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the wind blew and beat upon my house, and it fell."

"But you don't feel like that now; you're better, are not you?" asked her husband.

"I think," she replied, solemnly—"yes, I may say I'm sure—I'm upon the Rock now; but it's too late for much of building: there's only time in this end part of my life to show how I thank God for bringing me right at last."

"And what was it that comforted you?"

"Well, it's just this: I was in despair when I found out how bad I was, but Mrs. Hagar kept saying wouldn't it be to treat His word as if it were untrue, to ask Him to forgive me, and have me for His, and then not believe He meant it, when He said He would never cast out any that came to Him. And that He had bought the pardon when He died on the cross, and had prayed for His murderers even

when they were driving the cruel nails in, and had forgiven the thief that was crucified at His side."

"But, my dear," said Mr. Watts, "you were never so bad as that."

"Ah, James!" replied his wife, gently, "*that* would never have brought me peace; it's just made rest in my heart thinking how Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

Allen's watch was a real beauty, Mr. Anderson having himself undertaken its selection. And when there appeared in the small local paper, which had been started since Hethering had grown into importance, and which was generally considered by the inhabitants a very leading journal, a full account of the presentation and the circumstances connected with it, in all of which Allen was designated as "our townsman," and much applauded, he was felt to have risen into a distinguished public character, and Charlie and Bessie almost thought they ought to treat him to company manners when they called with

overpowering admiration and envy to inspect the new treasure. If the lad had not been unfeignedly humble he would have been in great danger of growing conceited. But happily no such evil result could ever be traced; he remained as simple-minded and open-hearted as he had been before.

Mrs. Watts, with her own hands, constructed of the best purse silk as strong a watch-guard as, she said, could be found in a jeweller's shop; quietly remarking as she fastened it on, "For myself I need no memorial of East Bank Tunnel, it was there I found out that you were right and I was all wrong."

Those who join the ranks of Christ's army late in life have, if not the longest, generally the hardest part of the fight. Old habits have acquired strength, new ones are gained with difficulty. The whole machinery of a life is stopped, and the engine reversed—a change for which no small amount of resolution is necessary. Mrs. Watts was often tempted to despair in the hard struggle to overcome.

"It's as I said at first," she was sometimes tempted to exclaim after some outbreak of the

old temper had humbled her to the dust; "my life is too deep-set to be rightly altered now."

But the same thought helped her in the conflict which had brought her peace at first; and it was Mrs. Hagar who, with humbly proffered counsel, brought it to her mind.

"It's like at the beginning," Mrs. Hagar said. "You knew it would be dishonouring Christ to doubt His willingness to forgive; and it seems as bad like to think He can't keep any of us from the power of sin if we trust Him. Mr. Wilfred told us ever so often He was called 'Jesus,' which meant Saviour, because He would *save His people from their sins.* And I mind how he told us of Saul of Tarsus being changed. It's been a deal of help to me thinking on it."

And it was a 'deal of help,' too, to Mrs. Watts, to have the Christian teaching, which Mrs. Hagar retailed, coming to her with a strong, womanly sympathy accompanying the words, and with a living illustration in her who spoke them of the wondrous saving power of Divine Truth. So Mrs. Watts kept steadily

on with her face Zionwards, her life and disposition being gradually so influenced by her Christian faith, that, though herself continually more alive to her own deficiencies, those who lived with her could only wonder at the change which grace had wrought.

* * * * * *

Many years have passed away since those early Hethering days of which we have been writing, and the old inhabitants would scarcely know the place in its modern aspect. It has grown into quite an extensive town. The Railway Terminus has given place to an important junction. The little shops of former days have enlarged their premises, and taken to plate-glass windows, and do a thriving business, and the world is kept duly informed of this by the three local newspapers, whose advertisement columns have now entirely superseded the functions of our old friend the town crier.

Mr. Anderson, with silver hair, and somewhat feebler frame than of old, still works at his post, while his eldest daughter is ever at

his side, a constant helper in his work, and the light of his declining years.

Mr. Wilfred Anderson is the Incumbent of the new District Church, which stands among the terraces and villas of New Hethering; and he and his young wife are the centre of a bright circle of happy Christian workers.

If the noble proportions of the new Church tempt you to seek for a closer inspection, you will take notice from a board at the gate, that the keys are to be found at the house opposite, in the charge of Mr. A. Galbraith, verger. And even now at that same house opposite, a pleasant-looking young woman, whose face seems not wholly unfamiliar, is standing at the door with a bonnie crowing, struggling baby in her arms, whose excitement is fully accounted for, when he is presently mounted on the shoulders of a hearty-looking young workman, who has reached the door while you were taking that last look at the Church, and is now going in to dinner, having come from his carpenter's shop down the street. In the man's open brow, and the gentle face

of his wife, we have little difficulty in recognizing our old friends Allen and Bessie.

There is a kind-looking old lady in the parlour, whom Galbraith and his wife call "Auntie," in whose arms the baby nestles peacefully while the young mother performs her household duties. But in this case recognition is impossible, for it is hard indeed to realize that the silver-haired, gentle-featured woman, upon whose countenance is written the "Peace of God that passeth understanding," is the hasty-tempered, hard-featured Mrs. Watts of former years. Her husband has long since been laid in the cemetery, and she is now declining in strength; but she is looking on into the future with a calm confidence, unshaken by the humble sense she ever retains of her own shortcomings, that when her journey of life is ended, she too has a place—she thinks it must be the lowest—in the Father's House of many Mansions.

THE END.

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